

# HOUSE OF LORDS #13

This is *House Of Lords*, a zeen by, for and about publishing and publishers, GMing and GMs. It runs no games, and is available to just about anybody. It's composed primarily of the thoughts of its publisher, and an array of letters on topics relevant to publishing a dipzeen in the modern world. Hopefully, this is a forum for those with experience to share the wealth.

You can get this zeen any of several ways. First of all, by sending me one American Dollar per issue. Second, by trading publications with me. Third, agree to run this off for me (at no cost to myself, and in the manner to which I have become accustomed). Might as well keep on trying. NonGMpubbers are obviously limited to the first option only, having nothing to trade (too bad).

I also expect a fair amount of participation from all of you out there. This zeen sinks or swims on the basis of your contributions.

And your publisher for this evening is Dick Martin, 26 Orchard Way N, Rockville, MD 20854-6128.

Each subheading has at one time been the subject of a New Business "feature." That's how we choose topics, more or less. If you'd like to see a particular topic discussed, just write a couple paragraphs worth of your opinions on the subject to get the ball rolling and we'll go with it.

It's been a while since the last issue, but I hope to set *HOL* on a bi-monthly schedule until the end of the year. From there we'll see how things look.

## Announcements

At least three new zeens have dropped into my mailbox over the last few months, and all look pretty good. Give these two a glance if you get the chance.

*Hagalil Hamaarvi* is Ran Ben-Israel's new zeen (RR 2, 571 Sunnidale Rd, Barrie, Ontario Canada, L4M 4S4). Cost is 10/\$7 Can, \$6 US, \$3 for game starts, and the zeen features an Israeli/Jewish theme.

*Not Up To Modern Graphics Standards* is by Michael Hopcroft (2190 W Burnside, #108, Portland, OR 97210). Subs go for 10/\$6, games are free. Recent issues have featured a discussion of political philosophy along with movie reviews and the Dip stuff.

*Excitement City Unlimited* is the name that Simon Billenness has finally settled on for his new zeen. What'll be in it? I don't know, I can't find my copy of the first issue anywhere. Besides driving on the wrong side of the road, it seems that some Brits also read zeens from back to front, at least that's what I gather from the premier. Simon's at 630 Victory Blvd, #6F, Staten Island, NY 10301-3521.

Simon has also taken over the American half of the International Subscription Exchange from Steve Knight. You know, that's where you send Simon \$\$ which he converts to whatever currency you like and then forwards off to wherever for foreign zeen subs. Or something like that.

In a related development, Ken Peel is now publishing the *Zeen Register*, taking over from Simon Billenness (my my, haven't we been busy wheeling and dealing, *hmm?*). Ken's at 8708 First Ave, #T2, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3555.

Last but not least, Simon will be handling publicity (at least the American end of it) for the upcoming Worldcon. That'll be next year sometime, and somewhere in Britain.

On the fold front, Scott Hanson has folded *Pommes Mit Mayo* and Dave Carter has folded *Sleepless Knights*. I think that Steve Knight is folding *It's a Trap!*, though I've heard nothing definite on that.

Rumor has it that Bruce Geryk is switching *Blunt Instruments* to a semi-annual schedule, though I've heard nothing concrete on that. If that's the case, expect another issue any day now. Bruce is supposedly starting up a United league, though the entry deadline for that may have passed by the time you read this. Latest address I have for him is 5528 S Everett, #3D, Chicago, IL 60637.

If I can swing it, I'd like to get *HOL* out on a bi-monthly basis or so. Work, school, a mushrooming *Re-tal* and even a Dip game or two of my very own are conspiring against that. We shall see. If we can't publish



at *least* that quickly I see no point in continuing the zeen. Quarterly is just too slow, and long turnarounds like this one—while nice for my sanity once in a while—aren't something I'd stand for as a subscriber. What do you all think about it?

Last issue I announced that Julie Martin (aka "The Wife") was a new MNC. This is indeed the case. This is *not* an attempt on her part to create any schisms or make some absurd "hobby power grab" as has been implied. Rather, MNC "Karel Alaric" was looking for a replacement and she volunteered, and that's all there is to it. From my understanding of the situation, Julie gives out real "Miller Numbers" and Fred Hyatt (the other MNC) gives out "North American Variant Bank Numbers." If you *must* get some sort of number for your variant games, either or both should be fine. Really, what's the point of the things? Not like there are any variant rating systems that will be confused, or any tracking done to be sure that variants haven't been orphaned. My impression is that less than half a dozen people both know and care about the whole situation anyway.

The "junk mail" issue has been put off indefinitely. Just not enough interest to warrant a mass mailing at this time. If the situation changes, I'll be happy to reconsider. If any of you Euros would like to mass distribute something to North American pubbers, this would be a good way to do it. Maybe we could work out some sort of reciprocal deal, where one of you handles printing/mailing in Europe and I do the American half. Idle speculation.

Just received an anonymous letter the other day for print in *HOL*. It's my opinion that publishing anonymous or unattributed letters is bad editorial policy (unless you're *Penthouse*, maybe), and I won't do it. So if you'd like to see your letter in print, sign it. Really, if you're worried about getting stabbed for what you say here, you shouldn't be: most of these people aren't big game-players anymore—having moved on to more esoteric pursuits.

Some rearranging of topics this time. "Custodians" has sprung up from several different categories, while "Old Guard" lives on, however briefly. The new blood list goes to sleep for an issue due to lack of space, but is yours for the asking. It will be back next time, for sure. For the first time, there's no new topic. That's mostly due to a lack of space, as I have a topic all picked out and the article is half written. No point in keeping you in suspense: it'll be about Letter Columns. Again, if you have some expertise in a particular area, or just questions to ask, we'd love to hear from you.

And how about Paul Molitor's 38+ game hitting streak?

## The Concept

(PETER SULLIVAN) I would have thought that the average British games zeen has a turnaround of about a week to ten days, more if an external printer is used. As such, I'm rather proud of my normal five days, including one day spent posting the thing back home for printing.

Biggles is, I think, a little optimistic in saying that the British hobby is speeding up. What happened was that there was a handful of three-weekly and faster zeens which helped to bring down the average for a few years. There are now defunct or slowing down (*Back to the Dark Ages* monthly, *Vienna* four-weekly, *CMag* three- to four-weekly), and I suspect that the 1987 Frequency survey will show a return to an underlying downward trend. And it's not the eye stalks so much as that scaly skin which is the problem....

[Isn't there some sort of skin cream or plaster to take care of that?

[Do you think that zeens will plateau at a certain publishing rate, say once a month or every five weeks?]

(STEVE EMMERT) Maybe I should move to strike my earlier comment on press. (Why not? I can do it in court, and everybody knows that Lords is just a big, fancy courtroom.) I'll ignore Olsen's senile prattling out of sympathy for the old guy and note my agreement with what Peel says. The new people in the hobby seem to catch on rather quickly to what good press is and are very creative in applying it. The only thing that takes time is catching up on some of the inside jokes, but I'm a patient man. (Speaking of senility, say, Ken, why haven't I received a *Politesse* since January?)

I have read in *DW* several articles in a series designed to classify Dip players (psychologically, I presume) according to what they want out of the game; e.g. to be King Kong or just a power broker. To save the editors of that publication time, I will state here and now my belief that Diplomacy exists solely for the purpose of providing us with a vehicle for press releases. All this tactics nonsense is secondary to the real issue of who writes the best press. The pen is mightier, and all that.

[While I've always believed that the game was *slightly* more important than the press, I try never to tell the players that when I'm the GM. I'd say they were about equal now, and if you've got a good game with good press then so much the better!



[Please don't strike your earlier remark, doing so might wrinkle the page.]

**(MALCOLM SMITH)** Thanks for *HOL* 12. I wrote to you a few months ago with a pile of stuff, but judging by the comments that you've written in this issue, I assume that you didn't get them. Anyhow, I'm alive 'n' kickin', I can assure you.

I agree with Peter Sullivan about the turnaround of magazines in the British Hobby slowing down. It's now come to the ridiculous situation where my magazine *Bohemian Rhapsody* is the most regular of all the UK magazines that I get!

Pete says that editors run more games than they'd like! This both amazes and worries me. It was over a year before I managed to get my first gamestart, and after two years, I filled my second. Is it going to take a third to get the next game going?

Simon Billenness mentions that English players don't know how to play England, and that, as a rule, we find Russia easier to handle. I've always had problems with Russia—always having problems getting out of Scandinavia and all that. When I'm Germany I find it a piece of cake to "sew up" the Russians so that they come to a full stop in the Gulf of Bothnia, and after a few seasons, I can find myself in Scandinavia trying to kick Russia in the teeth.

In fact, I find England, after Germany, the easiest country to play—it's the easiest to defend, if one doesn't open to the Norwegian Sea, by a series of self-standoffs against the most aggressive of attackers, and I find it the country with the most options. To tell the truth, all of my victories (that should have been singular) have been with England.

[Self standoffs for defense of England? Maybe that's why you guys have so much trouble—Americans view the self-bounce in North Sea on the first turn as somewhat counterproductive (though I have seen it used once). I like Russia, because if you want to talk options—Russia's got 'em.

[My first impression of *BR* from a few years ago was that it wasn't very much of a game zeen—there were lots of other things going on, but the games weren't that important. Now that you've "gone warehouse" you should be able to fill as many games as you like. There certainly seem to be plenty of volunteers for En Garde! I'd be one of them, too, if I had the time.

[Some editors run games as an excuse to permit them to publish, some GMs publish as a way to let them run games. Some like to do both. Very few seem not to like to do either (fortunately). While British zeens have a slow turnaround, is it a

predictable one? For instance, if the deadline is on the 5th, you can expect the zeen to be out by the 12th.

[And no, the first bunch of stuff that you refer to never got here. At least it hasn't yet—it takes an average of six weeks for mail to travel from Norway to me. How long does it take this to get to you?]

**(WALLACE NICOLL)** I must agree with Pete Sullivan's comment on page 2 [*of last issue*] about the UK hobby. Some zeens seem to be dead, or at least approaching a form of senility when they close all the waiting lists because they're full up. How can you expect to attract new people into the hobby when 1/2 the zeens cannot offer a gamestart of even standard Dip!

Your reply to Peter, page 3. I would say that if someone has their own duplicator/copier, time delay would be deadline one weekend, printing the next, mailed on Saturday/Monday. External printers obviously cause an increase in time.

[Whew, most pubbers over here *try* to get their zeens out by the end of the same deadline weekend. From what I've seen, we also tend to run simpler games without the involved writeup for something like En Garde! or that knights tournament game in *POW* (love those names!).

[The easy way to attract novice players is to dig up novice pubbers and GMs to take care of them. Most zeens tend to fossilize after a few years, and no longer improve or try new things. While that may be "good" it's not always interesting.]

**(PETE GAUGHAN)** I *still* haven't gotten approval of tax-exempt status yet. Everything else hinges on that. I may *reapply* now because several of us have incorporated as DOTS, Inc — Diplomats of Texas Society, Inc. The main purpose is to apply for Dipcon XXI, but we can bring zeens under the DOTS umbrella if that turns out to be more efficient.

The reason I don't copyright any part of my zeen is none of it is copyrightable, except as a "copyrighted compilation." Most of the excerpts I print are either under copyright already, or have been copyrighted and have lapsed into the public domain. I have never printed an original work except my own editorials on politics, literature, or society (and, recently, the columns by my assistant editors), which I'm not interested in copyrighting. If I get any fiction to print, I'll certainly do this.

Tell Bill Salvatore (if you feel like it) he handled the linguistics fine (I'm a linguist by training, in his terms).



[Sounds like non-profit status isn't as easy as it looked at first. Have you been rejected, or is the application still in the works?]

**(LARRY PEERY)** As for the incorporation thing. As you may know by now the Texas Diplomacy players have also incorporated as a "non-profit" group. Greg Ellis has been doing his homework. I'm not sure if PJ filed himself or is under the Texas umbrella. Anyway, he'll need at least a year to see how it goes.

I consider incorporation (either as a profit-making or non-profit corporation) as a future possibility. It is a lot more difficult here in California to gain that status (especially non-profit) and a lot more expensive, especially if you have to pay legal costs to do it (and you almost have to here). But it is an option I'm leaving open. The total costs of the licenses, annual fees, business permits, forms that must be filled out annually, etc, is a real pain. Still, anything is possible.

Is *DW* non-profit? You haven't been reading your *DW*'s annual financial report, have you? Hell, you haven't been reading *DW* unless you've been reading somebody else's! Anyway, my basic plan was that everything would have to pay for itself: the zeen, the other pubs, etc. Sub prices would cover the cost of doing the zeen. Other pub sales would cover themselves and generate a small surplus to be used to help cover overhead, etc. Endowment funds would provide seed money for special projects and printing costs for major items (like the Anthology volumes). I figured a \$3.00 per issue charge would cover the cost of a 60-page issue and leave some over as a reserve. Unfortunately, most issues have run closer to 80 pages and some more, so that has pretty much wiped out the profit margin for the zeen's sub costs. On the other hand, our investments and so forth (in various publications) have given *DW* a nest egg or bank account to draw on for the future. I'm guesstimating that there is about \$5,000 worth of materials stashed away for future sale (up from \$1,000 or so when I took over). And, of course, there's the cash in the bank, enough to cover all the outstanding sub obligations. Naturally, this has taken a hard-nosed attitude, especially in distributing free issues. I'd like to give away staff copies, contributor's copies, review copies, etc, but it requires selling 5-7 copies for cash to cover the cost of one freebie, and circulation doesn't justify that. It probably never will. So, in the classic business sense, *DW* is non-profit. It meets all the criteria for that status as far as I know. And in reality, it is also very much non-profit. My only hope is that it is proving profitable to the hobby. Otherwise, it isn't

worth it.

One big thing that is going to be a draw on *DW* is the cost of the sampler we are going to be providing to the hobby. I haven't done a lot to promote *DW* in the past year because I wanted to wait and see what was going to happen in terms of stability, scheduling, etc. I think we are now at the point where we can start reaching out to the hobby and beyond seeking to expand it. That's going to cost money. It costs from 50¢ to \$1 to respond to each inquiry about the zeen or the hobby, and we get a lot of those inquiries, and a lot of those inquiries don't include any money or even a SASE.

If I can use an overworked analogy, *DW* may be likened to the hobby's flagship. I'm reminded of the USS United States or the Cunard Queens (hummm, seems appropriate, somehow...). The Queens actually made money for a while. I don't think the US ever did, but it was the American flagship. It wasn't until wartime that the Queens proved their worth, and they did much to turn the tide for the Allies. Unfortunately, most people only see the cabins and the public rooms of such ships. They don't think about what goes into them and is below the waterline, out of sight. *DW*'s like that. People see the magazine, but don't stop to think that what they see actually represents about 60% of the work involved. The biggest risk I've taken to date with *DW* comes in the next few months when I start publishing the next three volumes of the Anthology series. Each one of those will be roughly the equivalent to a year's worth of *DW*. It's a substantial investment, but one I think will pay off in time. It marks the beginning of building a real hobby library of literature beyond just the magazines, etc. Oh well, stayed tuned for further developments.

Anyway, the bottom line is that I no longer cringe when I walk into the post office, buy \$300 worth of stamps, and they don't even check my ID for a check. And my printer calls the technician to adjust the machine when I use heavier than normal paper for the pages and covers, and I spend more on typewriter ribbons than most publishers spend on printing and postage. And I discovered you can't stuff more than 50 checks into an ATM at one time.

[You mean you *trust* an ATM to handle money and do it right? I never use the things, because I know that if they make a mistake then I have to battle the bureaucracy to fix it. At least with people you can talk things out on the spot. And my sister had a bank account cleaned out when somebody stole her ATM card once (fortunately she was almost broke at the time anyway).

[*DW* is "investing" in publications? Trying to



corner the futures market in *Redwood Curtain*, or what? Don't invest too much in anthologies or whatever until you're certain they'll be sold—you may be forced to take a writeoff if they prove less popular than you'd hoped. Cash flow makes the world go 'round, not stockpiled inventory.

[No, I don't read *DW*. I seem to prefer the hobby sailboats to the hobby flagships.]

**(JOHN CARUSO)** Consider this a formal apology to Russ Rusnak. My intent wasn't to belittle him or his argument. I didn't view my comments as doing this, but if he took it that way, so be it. I'm not elitist. I can apologize for any offense taken. And I do, right here and now.

[OK, we hear and acknowledge. (nudge nudge, wink wink)]

**(RUSS RUSNAK)** I just got a letter from Berch about a complaint which may or may not be legitimate. I really don't pay much attention to any type of feud or pre-feud shit. I guess I'm hoping that it won't infect *HOL*. I've really gotten to enjoy it (I enjoy it so much I'm even sending a donation along). Actually I think I just enjoy seeing my name in print. Would you be interested in having a guest GM run a game here — what the hell, I may as well leech off your ability to draw people. At least I'm honest about it.

[Gee, Russ, a donation! I'm touched.

[Sorry, I'm not really interested in running any games, even if you're willing to guest GM. Though I appreciate the offer (even if you *are* just trying to get your name in lights!), that would imply that *HOL* would have to run on a schedule of some sort to carry the game, and that just will not do! Besides, this just isn't a game zeen.]

**(BRUCE LINSEY)** In regard to Russ Rusnak's comments, I'd say you are slowly moving toward your objective of having the zeen discuss issues without indulging in personal attacks, but you aren't there yet.

[I agree, though some people seem to confuse individuals expressing their opinions with "personal attacks" a little more readily than they ought to.]

**(STEVE LANGLEY)** I'm not sure if it is me, or if we have run out of interesting things to say. Probably it is me. There were few high points, Julie's explanation of what an archivist does, for

instance. Not a subject that I'd ordinarily care about, but she laid it out so clearly that the reading was good.

I do note, finally, that I'm not a writer who is worth his salt. I don't have copies of all I have written filed away, or even stacked in a box. Shoot, if it were not that I came across a copy, while rummaging through a used book store, I wouldn't even have my own copy of the novel I wrote. Not worth my salt at all. I wonder how much salt that might be. Is it the salt in the containers on my shelves or just the salt that could be obtained by rendering me down? In either case, it's not worth much.

[I wouldn't say that. At one time salt was a very valuable commodity, and you can win games of Civilization if you get enough salt cards. Even a little salt can be valuable—try living without any.

[Some issues seem boring to me, too. What I think is interesting some of you will find tedious, and vice versa. With that being the case, I try to cover enough ground here so that there's something for everybody.

[And I mention Russ once in a while because it makes him so happy.]

**(ALAN STEWART)** Another fine issue of *HOL*. Your contributors seem to be rounding into form and pulled off some really snappy lines last issue.

How come all your topics have three stars? I think you should rate them from one to five stars based on how interesting the topic is intrinsically and how illuminating the discussion has been.

Perhaps someone can help me with something I've always been doubtful about — exactly what are the distinctive features of "Golden Age" press? In my rudimentary understanding, it involves the creation of fictional characters and a story line, with the height being reached when two press writers' fictional characters interact with each other and their activities stand in some clever relation to the game's events. I read some of Rod Walker's press somewhere and must confess that it left me absolutely cold, not provoking a flicker of reaction of any kind, not humor, interest, awe, disgust — nothing. On the other hand, Conrad wrote a press series for *Praxis* that I thought was brilliant.

It seems to me that the "Golden Age" model would represent only one of many models of "good press."

[I just gave everything ★★★ because it seemed like the thing to do at the time. I considered rating



each category, but decided against it when I couldn't figure any good reason for doing so. My personal favorite has been the "Out of Dipdom" stuff on how everybody found their way to the postal Dip hobby, but that generates little discussion. Other categories seem boring to me, but have lots of reader response. How can I possibly determine "intrinsic" interest? Some of the more obscure topics have turned out to be the most interesting ones as well.

[Your description of Golden Age Press is very good. While it's not *impossible* to write decent GA press, most of it seems too contrived or poorly written to be worth reading. Just hacking the stuff out according to formula won't do, as you well know.

[Why not write up something on the different types of press for us? How they work, how a publisher can encourage (or discourage) certain kinds of press, how to present press in the zeen...lot's of possibilities.]

## Archives

**(PETER SULLIVAN)** Hey, I was already thinking about doing my Politics dissertation in the third year on Dipdom, if I can swing it. Something like "Micro-politics in a limited environment: the Diplomacy Hobby and Feuding." I doubt they'd approve it, but a man can dream, can't he?

[So send me a copy when you finish. Why, I'll even give you a free issue or two sub extension.]

**(STEPHEN DORNEMAN)** I'll see what I can do about digging up some info on the various SF fanzeen collections in libraries. I know there's a big one associated with a specialty library in Toronto—maybe some of your Canadian contributors can help us out here.

[Maybe our man in Toronto could look into it. Alan? Know anything about this?]

**(MALCOLM SMITH)** I've got a collection of magazines, literature, letters, and so on and so forth that take up about 14 cubic feet or so of my workroom. It's only a collection of what I've been involved in in this hobby (trades are included as an involvement, as through them I "saw" the rest of the Hobby)—but I would never claim to call it an Archive.

Until the day that I go through the lot and catalogue all the games and all that (for example, I may want to follow all Italy's victories), it'll remain a

collection.

Who knows, when I retire in about 33 years time, I'll not only have a massive collection, but I'll have plenty of time on my hands to catalogue that little lot.

Or perhaps make a bloody huge bonfire....

[To keep you warm through those cold Norwegian summers, eh? But what to do now that you're back to Belgium....]

**(WALLACE NICOLL)** I have used the UK archives (Walkerline) for a couple of items—notably where I want to check up on previous runs of an obscure variant that I'm interested in. What is the point in archiving Dip or hobby letters? I can understand the archiving, or at least referencing, of articles and maybe letter columns discussing hobby matters. Surely an archive arranged by topic might be in order, or a vast cross-referencing index tied to a complete collection of zeens. The index could be made available for a fee, and then editors or those interested in specific articles, games, etc, could contact the central store, or whoever keeps originals, asking for copies. That was effectively what I did with Richard W. I don't know whether he has extensive indexes to games, etc, but I simply asked to have copies of game reports for "Game of the Clans" and he duly provided the same for me.

[Any idea how extensive his collection is?]

**(PETE GAUGHAN)** I can't see *why* anybody would want to have a copy of every zeen or flyer ever—but I can believe that *somebody* would. Larry Peery was kind enough, from *Perelandra* #0, to sub; *not* because he was doing an archive, but he does have a complete set. When I folded the zeen, I sent a set of Elmer Hinton unsolicited, but received no thanks or acknowledgement. Thus, apparently, both of them are just gathering paper without a lot of effort. The moral of this: I don't think either Larry or Elmer has yet been really clear on why they have stored zeens. Is it because they *like* zeens? Or because somebody might use 'em in the future?

[Larry and Elmer sound like compulsive collectors, though Elmer doesn't do a very good job of it. Larry asked for a complete set of *Retals* a couple years ago, but I never got around to making one up. Lazy me.]

**(ROBERT SACKS)** The Orphan Games Project has always viewed the existence of a functioning



archives where we could obtain history of orphans as highly desirable. Perhaps one of these days we might get one.

[While I did orphan games the method used was to ask around until we could find someone with the zeens we needed. I guess you could call it a "distributed" archive. With a general idea of who got (and saved) what, you could find just about anything you needed.]

**(ALAN STEWART)** I am the type of person who thinks hobby archives are a good idea. If there was a substantial archive within one hundred and fifty miles of me, I would travel there once or twice a year to look over it for a day. If the Great Archives were further away, I might order some back copies if the printing costs were reasonable—not more than four or five cents a page.

Considering that I expect the great majority of the hobby would be much less interested than me, I have to wonder whether the total hobby interest is sufficient to sustain the project. Is it going to be worthwhile to do all the work necessary to provide a Great Archive when all its use is going to be limited to maybe a couple of personal visitations a year and a request for a few copies every few months? That, at most, is what I predict hobby demands upon a Great Archive would amount to. I sure wouldn't want to do all that organizational work for such a minimal return. But if someone else would find the work fascinating or fun—great. I worked as an archivist one summer. We were a wild bunch. Our motto was "If in doubt, throw it out."

[I think that an Archive would get even less use than that, unless it was convenient to a major Dipcon or related activity.]

**(MELINDA HOLLEY)** I think an organized Archives would be nice. I can just imagine a Dipper's offspring deciding to write a paper (sociology, political science, etc) on Diplomacy. It could be useful for someone deciding to put together an anthology or "how-to" booklet. As to an "official" Archives...well, who has the time, energy, etc, to be the "only" Archivist? As Julie pointed out, it's not merely putting all *House of Lords*, *Costaguana*, (etc) together.

[So we're agreed, then. An archive is a wonderful thing to have if we can get somebody else to do the work!]

**(JOHN CARUSO)** A new name for a custodianship—Old Zeens Stuffed In Boxes Service, or OZSIBS for short. The OZSIBS Archives—sort of has a ring to it.

[I can tell you like it. Why not volunteer?]

**(LARRY PEERY)** I enjoyed reading Julie's words on Archives. In fact, I was so impressed that I am shipping off the Archives to her, COD, all 45 boxes of it. Have fun sorting out those grocery lists, Julie. Anyway, just remember the next time it gets cold and snowy and your power is off and you don't have any fuel or wood around for the fire—I've got the Archives!

## Burnout

**(JOHN CARUSO)** Despite my contributions to this and a few other zeens, I'm in the midst of burnout (sounds so sexually explicit, doesn't it? Kathy, keep your hands off of me!). My diplomacy desires are waning. Some days they wane more than others. I find it fascinating that I still publish *KK/W*, even if I don't do much of the writing. I guess it's my high responsibility level.

**(ANDY LISCHETT)** The worst guilt of near-burnout is one that Steve Langley didn't mention: the guilt of not answering inquiries from novices. Maybe Steve didn't get that bad, but I have.

[I've never gotten quite to this stage, though sometimes it takes me a month to get around to it. I just remember what it was like when I first entered Dipdom and that inspires me. Or reminds me that I really *ought* to send these poor folks *something*.]

**(STEPHEN DORNEMAN)** Burnout? I think I'll write about that discussion topic later. When I have more time. I'll just put this copy of *HOL* on the stack to remind me...Gee, that stack's getting awfully big. Maybe tomorrow I can get to some of it.

[Hmmm, why does that sound like what I've been saying to myself the last couple months every time I looked at the "incoming" stack of *HOL* letters?]

**(WALLACE NICOLL)** We've had comments (Doug and I) along the lines of "Howcum you've



not burned out? Producing that many pages must be lots of work!" Sure it is, but we get other folk to produce more than 60% of it. We only do the "getting it together into a sellable whole." We have the editorial power to do that! And produce only what we want to, or feel up to. I guess we could go on like this until World War III, but fate will intervene, I'm sure, and I'll get a job at the other end of the country, and Doug will get that super job working in Singapore for two years. The format will necessarily change, more like an APA with three distinct subzeens: mine, Doug's and Derek's, plus the extra game reports. By spreading the load, when one is down and out, the others can carry on, or try to pull the third along. When Derek moved recently, the zeen still made it to 56 pages. When I was in the States last year, Doug and Derek did all the work on the issue then. When Derek was busy with finals...you get the drift. Burnout cannot really affect a co-operative zeen. It might affect one of those involved, and as long as the others can cope—you cannot survive where everyone is a specialist and nobody else can cover for him/her—there shouldn't be more than a minor disruption to the ether. We find it works well. Quite a few other UK zeens work on a similar "many hands make light work" approach, but the converse can also be true if those involved ("too many cooks spoil the broth") don't work together *as a team*.

[The teamwork is hard to pull off here in the US, because most of us are quite geographically distant from our co-pubbers. For instance, I've had subzeen pubbers and guest GMs as close as New Carrollton MD and as far away as Sheridan OR, Chicago IL, and Rochester NY. There's just no way any of them could pick up the slack in a slow month. Typically, US zeens are based on the zeen/subzeen model, rather than true cooperative efforts. About the only exception that comes to mind is *Politessse*, which is the product of a group of DC/MD/VA gamers as an informal "house" publication.

[Team publishing sounds ideal, and from the looks of *POW* it works quite well.]

**(LARRY PEERY)** Oh well, what about Burnout? I can empathize (if that's the word I want) with Steve. I'm one of the few people in the hobby who has had two different careers, or lives. I wonder if I have seven more waiting? My first one lasted from 1966 until 1972 or 1973. Then the curtain came down. I didn't really burnout on the hobby so much as I lost interest in it. I was naive enough when I got the IDA going to think that the hobby, as a hobby, was on its way and in good hands. So I went off in

pursuit of my other gaming interests. Only *DW* tied me to the mainstream of the hobby. I wasn't totally inactive, of course; during 1976-77 I wrote my book on Diplomacy, and I continued to keep in touch with some hobby friends, but it was definitely a low profile period.

Then in 1981 I came back to a whole new world. It was a rough go that first year because so many people knew me only from what others had said about me, and most of that was incorrect or worse. Still, I didn't take the time to try and rebut all the lies, etc. I just went ahead with what I was doing. The rest is history, as they say. My second career in the hobby has been even more rewarding than the first in many ways, although I still think of those days as the Golden Age of the hobby.

One thing I have noticed is that most often burnout is self-generated, although we usually place the blame for it on outside forces and factors. And, of course, they can have a certain bearing on our actions. Too often we expect that once we've achieved a certain plateau that everything will be fine, and we've arrived at nirvana. Bah...few zeens or publishers (or anything else in the hobby or out of it) ever achieve such a position. And if we do, we are usually comatose. Ups and downs are parts of life, learning to deal with them in or out of the hobby is part of living. I am amazed by one particular individual in the hobby at the moment, and since I've known him and we've been friends for lo, these many years, I'm going to use him as an example. There are others I could use, but Conrad's case is well known. In the last issue of *Costa* Conrad admits he has a problem and that the magazine is in trouble, etc. A classic case. He also lists a series of Draconian measures to solve his problems with the zeen. Then he turns around and starts a whole bunch of new projects and makes a bunch of new promises which will, almost assuredly, get him deeper into trouble. None of this is new to those of us who know Conrad, however. We're used to it. Oh well, it's a particularly virulent form of burnout.

However, I'm finding that I can steal a weekend away from Diplomacy finally. Last month we took a weekend off and went to Disneyland, and this past weekend I spent cleaning. What is important, however, is that these were the first weekends in a year and a half that I haven't had to work on *DW* stuff. Perhaps this is the laid back form of burnout familiar to southern California.

I must confess that when *Xeno* returns (as it surely will), I intend to do two things with it that I didn't do before. First, use guest gamesmasters to run the games. My experiences with Ken Hager and some of the GMs I've worked with in *DW's* Demo



games have been very encouraging. Second, another idea I've had is to use folded, burned-out pubbers/editors/gms as guest participants in the zeen, and even offer to serve as a guest pubber or editor for another pubber who wants to take a vacation or rest.

[So why is it that all the busiest Dipdomites (myself included) call themselves burnouts?]

**(ROBERT SACKS)** I burned out years ago. I must be on my fifth or sixth now.

**(BRUCE LINSEY)** Steve Langley did a better job of describing the feeling called "burnout" than I've seen anyone else do. Thankfully, I have never felt that way. I don't think there's been a day since I joined my first game that I haven't looked forward eagerly to opening and answering my mail. If I were to experience burnout as Steve describes it, I'd probably leave the hobby.

**(ALAN STEWART)** It is surprising how identical all descriptions of the symptoms of burnout I have seen are.

[I suppose I've burned out a couple of times now, though I suppose that was mostly just boredom. Doing roughly the same thing month after month, year after year—no matter how much I enjoy it—gets boring. One problem with publishing is that it doesn't lend itself well to taking a vacation for a month or two. Finishing one issue just means that it's time to start work on the next one. And so on and so forth, into eternity. Since a one-issue glitch can cause problems for quite a while, the pressure to avoid those little irregularities is great.

[Eventually, I just snapped—took my much-needed rest and vacation, and returned with a fresh approach. It seems that too many pubbers are too driven to sit back and enjoy what's happening around them. I know I am at times, and then I have to make a conscious effort to tone things down a bit and get some time away from Dipdom. Every little weekend helps.

[You may have guessed that I'm a little "burned out" when it comes to putting out *HOL*. Sure am. I've accomplished just about everything I wanted to with this zeen, and don't quite know what to do next. Fold? Maybe. If I didn't think this was still interesting I'd hang it up in a minute. With my busy fall schedule I'll have to be more selective about how I spend my time, and *HOL* is starting to inch its way down the priority list. *Retal* is capable of gobbling up as much of my Dip time as I let it, and

that's OK by me—I'd rather run games and play games than talk about them any day. We'll just have to see. If I can't do as good a job as I like with *HOL*, then it'll fold. At least this time it won't crash as violently as it did before.

[I feel burned out when I can seriously consider folding without a twinge of guilt. It's happened twice, but never seriously enough for me to actually take the plunge into non-publishing.]

## Census

**(MELINDA HOLLEY)** I like the idea. The hobby fluctuates a lot. A player coming into the hobby today might want to publish in a year or try his/her hand at a small con. What better way to find out who's close to you (geographically) or get a "master" list in order to send out flyers, complimentary copies, etc?

[Just asking around isn't bad, and just being aware of who might be willing to give you a bunch of addresses can be handy, but it's tough to beat an up-to-date census for usefulness. I used mine all the time.]

**(ROBERT SACKS)** Why? Wasn't the Black and Blue Book adequate?

[Well, the Black and Blue Book is slightly different, as it lists a bunch of face to face players along with the postal types (as well as phone numbers and gaming preferences), while the census just lists names and addresses. I haven't seen a copy of the BBB, but that seems like too much information to me. Maybe a separate listing of postal and ftf players would be a good idea (since it's all on computer and theoretically just resorting the data should do it). Would that be hard, Larry? How about telling us about the BBB—how many names, how often you update it, what it contains, etc?

[How is the census going, Conrad? I should have a list or two in here for you to attack.]

## Costs

**(MICHAEL HOPCROFT)** Costs are a big argument against pubbing. My biggest cost starting out is postage, which runs up to \$13.00 or so an issue. I am able to get my printing done fairly cheaply on a huge machine at a University printing office. The good news is that it only costs 1¢ a page (both sides) plus masters. The bad news, which I can live



with, is that I usually have to wait a few days to pick up my order. While-you-wait service is a luxury I cannot afford at the moment; as it is, I am spending a reasonable amount of money on something which should, after all, be a hobby activity. Connections can be useful (I went to school at that university, and will be working there this summer). I imagine the best way to keep my costs down would be to keep the zeen small. And I'm actually coming close to making some of the costs back in sub fees. No zeen could probably be supported by sub fees, but they help.

As for my other equipment, it's a matter of borrowing what I need when I need it. And returning it promptly (or seeing to it that it never leaves the premises).

[From a later letter....]

My costs went up a little this month, but fortunately 2.5 cent sales are an occasional event in Portland life, so I managed to take advantage of it. Still, that managed to get the zeen out. I haven't heard any response at all to my current issue, however, so I still wonder whether I'm doing anybody any good in this hobby. Just the occasional moment of self-doubt that is all too common with me.

[Supposedly *Costaguana* will be financed entirely by sub fees from now on. It'll be interesting to see how that works out.

[Love those 2.5¢ sales! If only I could find a place that had them all year long.... From the looks of it, your zeen with the long name is doing just fine. Patience!

[If you stay small, then cost really isn't that much of a factor. For about \$20 a month, you can put out an eight page zeen for thirty subbers, no problem. As hobbies go, that's pretty cheap!]

**(MALCOLM SMITH) *Bohemian Rhapsody*** doesn't cost much to produce as I can get most of it done at work in the production labs, hence the high quality of printing. But the real cost is postage—four sheets of A4 costs Nkr 3.50 to post outside Norway (=50¢), but a magazine up to 10 sheets costs Nkr 5 (=70¢) and those issues with 11 sheets or more cost Nkr 7 (= \$1). These are the surface printed matter rates, and they almost double if I want to send a copy of the magazine across Norway or Air Mail. Only a few issues go to the US Air Mail; those are for those like Bruce Geryk who play in the magazine, and to those chaps who work for the Chaosium games company in California, as I usually have piles of questions for them to answer for the next issue on their games.

I have about 60-65 subscribers, a long way

down (and manageable) from the days when I had 218. My last postage bill was about Nkr 400, which is roughly \$60. Of course, my bills get reduced if I can hand out a few issues to those in the Oslo games club instead of posting it, and those get their issues free.

But the *real* cost is in the computer hardware and software I use: a Sinclair QL. Once one's bought the 512K RAM, twin disks, daisy wheel and dot matrix printers, word processors (I have two and use both for *BR*), and the spelling checker (not yet running), then one can start to produce a magazine. Certainly, I would never use a dot matrix in NNLQ (Nowhere Near Letter Quality), as it should be called, to print a magazine.

[Ah, it's only fair to count hardware if the only reason you got it is to do zeen stuff. If you use it for work, play, or just because you had to have one, then publishing is just an excuse to play around with some neat hardware. The dot-matrix issue of *HOL* turned out to be very legible, though it's cheaper to do it with laser (the smaller print saves me pages and postage, offsetting the cost of the laser print).

[I don't see how you could manage a sub list of 218! I get antsy at around 70, and panic at 80. I've been living in terror at 100 for the last couple months, and it's just too much work. At least the way I publish.]

**(WALLACE NICOLL)** At the moment we have a seven-week deadline-to-deadline interval. In early days we were getting the zeen printed 300 miles away by a small one-man-and-wife photocopier-at-home operation who were offering cheap rates for non-profit-making, charities, games zeens, etc. His rates were about 1/3 the cost of getting commercial copying at a High Street copyshop (Kinkos would be a US example). Mimeo (stencil) is obviously cheaper still, but you cannot be as creative as you can with photocopying. Problem was the postal service was not that wonderful, and his workload grew rapidly as more zeens switched from mimeo to p/copy, and others started out. So the usual schedule went as follows: Friday deadline, adjudicate over weekend, type up reports and collect all bits of zeen together during the week. Contact any GMs who hadn't got reports in to find out when, if, and why not. Usually the whole thing was sent off the Saturday or Monday a week after the deadline. Usual time away 7-14 days, zeen goes into post the day it returns after collation, etc.

So that was on average about three weeks from deadline to subbers getting the zeen. Allowing for the foreign players we decided four weeks was a fair



balance; hence, seven weeks.

It also meant that we had a couple of weeks free to do other (non-hobby) things—since there *is* a life beyond the hobby.

So we continually hunted around for cheaper and more local printing. I also checked out buying/renting a copier which would have been a viable option, except that we didn't really have room for it, and we would also have been forced to take in other printing jobs to make it pay for itself.

We have now found a reliable, local, cheap printer who'll even collate and staple the zeen for us for a competitive price. We aim to break even with the UK subscribers. It costs about 55p to get the zeen printed for 64/68 pages, plus 20p postage. Obviously if we only manage 60 pages we make a few pence. The chances of us falling into the lower price bracket these days are slim—only when Derek doesn't get any of his stuff in!

As for the European and worldwide subbers, we lose money. Then there are the trades we get back. These do not, when calculated, come anywhere near the value going out—we have a 30-40 deficit per issue. Split two ways it's not *too* bad.

I did a bit on costings of various printing methods for the articles which got used in the UK Zeen Editor handbook, which later appeared in *OUAD* (on that, more later), and it seemed that 250 copies was the normal breakpoint between litho and photocopy. With photocopy, there is a flat charge per copy. With litho, the more you print the cheaper it is, ultimately getting to the stage where you are paying for the paper alone. With litho, the cost of making the printing plates, whether for 20 copies or 24 million, is the same. Spread that cost between your copies and you'll see what I mean.

As I said earlier, mimeo is cheaper to produce, but I would want to get some sort of electrostencil facility available—and with most companies now using copiers and not duplicators, there are few, if any, operations offering that facility. I am also checking out the availability of laser printers in this country, either to get or to set up as a print-bureau—I'm currently unemployed, and if I can show the scheme is viable, then I should be able to get money to buy the hardware, or at least rent it.

Circulation-wise, we hold around the 100-110 mark when you include complimentary copies to GMs, family, contributors, etc.

[I also considered starting up a print bureau, but decided that I just didn't have the time to go for it if it was to be a success. How many UK zeens have enough subbers to make the mass-production copy-ing worthwhile? It's a rare US zeen that has over

100 subbers, and *DW* is the only one I can think of with over 200.

[We *do* get a discount for photocopying, typically at about the 100 copy point. Also, I like to haggle and can sometimes get a cheaper basic rate too.

[Americans just wouldn't put up with waiting three weeks for game results to come back. Interest really slacks off after a very short time in those games.]

**(ROBERT SACKS)** Now that I have purchased my own Toshiba copier (at an initial cost of about \$3000), my printing costs are 1.3¢/pg white, 1.4¢/pg color, 0.5¢/over-print. My principal costs remain postage.

[I certainly hope you bought that copier before the scandal broke!]

**(MELINDA HOLLEY)** I've noticed the cost of *Rebel* increasing dramatically in the last six to eight months. 'Course, the page count and sub list have increased as well so I didn't think too much about it. Last November, I'd written the copying business I deal with about the costs and received some information on their base rates along with quantity discounts, etc. The last issue of *Rebel* was really expensive, so after getting it out in the mail, I sat down and researched from January, 1986 through April, 1987. I used their base figures for my calculations. Some of the billings were pretty close (within \$1.00). But I found that since October, 1986, I'd been consistently overbilled (sometimes as much as 20%). So I sat down and wrote a six-page letter (breaking down the calculations and including copies of cancelled checks) formally complaining. That was last week. Hopefully I'll hear back soon since I gave them a deadline to respond. I'd like to know if anybody else has problems like this, or do I need to begin getting paranoid?

[My experience with copy shops has been wildly variable. Some printers are more professional than others, and tend to get the bills right. Kinkos is one that I watch out for, though, as they just seem to pick a number out of a hat next to the cash register. They usually come within \$10 of the final charge, and they've underbilled me so many times that I don't complain when they overbill. I may come out a little ahead, but not much. Usually it's a case of a rushed college student working part time and they really don't care if they get the numbers exactly right. My current printer is much more professional and only rarely goofs the price (they're also much



slower). If I have a question on the bill, I just ask them to explain the charges—they find their mistakes that way.

[The more you print, the more your subbers will write. The more your subbers write, the more you print. Add in that running more games draws more subbers and you have the recipe for a cost spiral that will eventually bankrupt you. Have a good time on the way to the poor house, I am.]

## Custodians

**(STEVE EMMERT)** Will someone please humor a poor, wide-eyed innocent and tell me how much the hobby services cost on an annual basis? If Diptax is so bloody controversial, the numbers must be astronomical. If, on the other hand, the dispute is philosophical rather than economic, then will an occasional fund-raiser such as the PDORA suffice?

[Let's see, the Census cost me about \$25 a year, and my half of the orphan service ran to about that much also. Obviously, the dispute is a philosophical one, at least on my part. Diptax advocates that we raise money to fund services, I advocate that we cut costs and run on a shoestring budget.

[I think PDO and donations have been doing just fine, though I have no details in that regard.]

**(MICHAEL HOPCROFT #1)** How many Miller Number Custodians are there? Who decided which one is legitimate? Which one gets copies of my zeen? (I'm getting close to filling a Gunboat start.)

I just had an odd thought recently. What would happen if the hobby *elected* the custodians? Sure it would politicize the offices, but the offices are politicized anyway. They are going to be politicized no matter what they do. And it might settle the issue of which custodians are the "legitimate" ones. It's only an odd idea, and it will probably get nowhere. There are several problems, chief among them being defining the electorate and running a fair election. The former would mean getting a hold of the sub list of every single zeen in the hobby, and determining which zeens are real zeens and which are "renegade." That in itself is a mammoth task. And who would select the Election Number Custodian, I wonder? But the results may be worth the trouble, if we can go for two to three years a term.

I wonder what you think of that little brainstorm.

Are we still on good terms? I hope so. I don't want people getting upset over little 'ol me. And I still want to get *HOL*, because I'm very interested in

what my fellow publishers are doing. I'm trying to use as much tact and diplomacy as I can muster to get out of this mess I've gotten myself into with Miller numbers. I'd still like to have some idea what all this is about. I know it has something to do with Robert Sacks and the general state of the hobby, as Sacks seems to be the main defender of the "alternative" custodian. I still haven't really decided what I'm going to do about this question; I have numbers from both Julie and Fred Hyatt and have no real objection to using either. It's the interests of my players that concern me at the moment, as I should hope they are the concern of any publisher. Sacks keeps saying I shouldn't let my players "blackmail" me, but aren't players what the hobby is all about? Call me an idealist, but I happen to believe every word.

[There are two variant number custodians. Depending on your interpretation of history and the philosophy of the numbers, either or both is a legitimate "Miller Number" custodian. I wouldn't go to the actual trouble of sending either one a copy of your zeen on a regular basis, but then there are a lot of things I wouldn't do.

[Electing custodians is an interesting idea, except that there aren't likely to be candidates for every position. For example, the orphan service has enough trouble trying to dig up volunteers to do the job, much less stir up enough interest to get *two* candidates. You also have the question of what is a "service" and what isn't. Is a pollster a "custodian" up for election, or just a curious statistics freak? Are the *Zeen Register* and *Dip World* "services" or just zeens? And so on.

[There is also a history of people working like crazy to get a position or title, and then doing nothing once they get it. The effort of being "elected" burns them out, or they were just in it for the ego gratification in the first place.

[I think I understand what Robert means when he says that you shouldn't be blackmailed by your players, but a GM that is unresponsive to his players will soon be without players. Use your diplomatic skills, you seem to be doing fine so far!]

**(MICHAEL HOPCROFT #2)** Hello. Robert Sacks is spreading this story that Fred Davis is spreading death threats the way people spread peanut butter. Fred, of course, denies this; he thought "fight to the death" was a metaphor. I haven't heard from you on the matter, but Sacks is very upset at me over this (he thinks I was "in" on the "plot" from the beginning). I'm trying to calm him down so that we can get back to arguing real-world political



theory without hobby politics getting in the way. So I'd like to see if you could explain to him what happened from my perspective from Day 1 of the whole sad mess. I can't get him to listen to *me*, because as I said he thinks I'm part of the plot. I also wanted you to understand what was going on, because as is obvious you have some stake in matters yourselves.

The exact dates escape me, but this all started for me when my Gunboat game filled. I needed to get a number, and so I wrote first to Julie Martin, because I had read in *House of Lords* that she was the Miller Number Custodian. She sent back a postcard requesting my player list, I sent one, and in a week I had the first of my Miller Numbers: 1987K/ra. I printed that number with the gamestart announcement in *NUTMGS* #2.

That's when the whole mess blew up in my face. Several of my players, whom I shall not name for obvious reasons, were curious about whether I was using the right number. But by far the most vehement response came from Fred Davis, with whom I trade for *Bushwacker*. Davis accused me of being a Sacks ally, and warned me that I would be making a fool of myself if I continued. There were no direct threats, but he implied that his position in the hobby was a powerful one, and that I would be facing trouble in other aspects of my operations if I would not desist. Specifically I feared that he would use his influence to prevent me from getting a Boardman number for my regular Diplomacy gamestart which was announced the same issue. To make the situation more frightening, I had sent two requests to Steve Heinowski, the BNC, and received no response, so I feared that exactly what I feared was taking place. (As it turned out, Heinowski was having trouble with a change of address, and had not received my requests.) Davis in turn demanded to know where I had gotten the number.

At first I was rather offended, but I decided to tell him the truth: that I had received a number from a person whom I believed, based on what I had seen in *House of Lords*, was the legitimate MNC, and that Robert Sacks (with whom I had just begun a correspondence dealing mainly with political topics) had had no influence whatever on my decision.

If the next letter I received from Davis was any indication, he was furious, but not at me. He was extremely upset that the report of the "alternative" custodianship had reached *House of Lords*, which is used and respected by many novice publishers. This was one week before ORIGINS. It was at that point I realized that Davis planned to confront Sacks and the Martins at ORIGINS. Although I had this information, I was unable to do anything about it; I telephoned Simon Billenness and one other person on

the east coast, but neither was attending the convention. The result was the unpleasant scene at the Hobby Meeting of which I have heard several conflicting reports including the death threat story.

During this whole period I was in contact with both Robert Sacks and with Fred Davis. Each attempted to present their side of the case to me. I was also in contact with Fred Hyatt, the MNC acknowledged by most of the hobby, who gave me a number which I printed in the next issue of my zeen. (Incidentally, I did in fact get a Boardman Number from Steve Heinowski.) In the end I found that Davis had presented the more compelling case; however, I am still in contact with both sides of the issue.

That is the whole story. At no time was I involved in a conspiracy, with Davis, Sacks, or anyone else. I have attempted to act according to my best judgement of the interests of my publication and my players, and I hold no malice towards any participant in these events.

My intent in writing this letter is to clear up any doubts about my intentions or good faith in this affair.

If nothing else, this embarrassing story should enlighten other novice publishers. I do not play the MegaDip game; I am not interested in power structures or feuds until they get in the way of my enjoying the hobby. This was such a case. I apologize for any damage I may have caused in my ignorance.

I hope you decide to print my account of this whole Miller-number fiasco. If nothing else it should remind other novices what dangerous ground they risk treading. It's enough to make one take up PARANOIA; it's not just a game, it's a way of life....

[Welcome to Megadip—if you don't seek it out, it will still track you down, stalking until one day you let down your guard. You seem to have fallen victim at a younger age than most. Be careful to memorize exact dates though, as well as zeen issue and page numbers, and save all off-the-record letters as if they were golden. For some obscure reason such things are treasured in some corners, and are occasionally used as secret passwords or trick handshakes which will one day get you into the "In Six."

[It's a rite of passage, these death threats. Until you make one or receive one, you are *nobody*. I really don't know how "serious" Fred was about it, but I rarely have red-faced, screaming poets shout metaphors at me. Robert was no more than six feet from the action, mouth agape, so he can tell you what happened as well as I. One of the few times I've seen him speechless....

[I really dislike peanut butter.



[Some people take the whole deal of "hobby position" and suchlike a lot more seriously than I do. I find Robert's case more compelling, but I've had the chance to see Robert and Fred argue the point in person, and Fred made some telling contradictions. Again, no big deal. In the long run, it will make little difference—the variant sub-hobby is comatose at the least and not very likely to wake up.

[No, really, as a beginning Troubleshooter, you have done well. The Computer is pleased with your progress, and will reward you with more difficult and dangerous tasks than getting a mere Miller number. Your next task is to take over the farce poll and make it respectable. Trust The Computer. After all, The Computer is your friend.]

**(MALCOLM SMITH)** Just what exactly is this Covenant, and what has Robert Sacks to do with it? I've heard so much of it, but nothing as to what it is about. Can you help? Can I have one?

[I'm sure Robert would love to send you one, as he is its keeper and protector (and author, as far as I know). I don't think it's any big deal, but it seems to have built up quite a reputation over the years.]

**(ALAN STEWART)** So Julie is the next MNC under the "covenant"? I thought the idea of a split based on a covenant was a neat idea when I first heard about it — reminds me of old schisms in the Scottish church. Just for the record, *Praxis* runs one variant, but it is totally handled by guest GM Steve Swigger; I am playing in it. He will have to sort out any uncertainty about what Miller number to get, and I will simply print whatever he sends me to print. The "covenant" raises an interesting issue I had been thinking of researching, to wit, the extent of an official's power to bind his successors, but I think that I will just stick the idea at the back of my ideas file and mind my own business for a while.

[Why is Julie the MNC "under" the covenant when it won't keep her dry in a rainstorm? Certainly seems to attract plenty of lightning, though.]

**(ROBERT SACKS)** Zarse Number Custodian: Besides the prohibition on mandatory fees, what other policies would the ZNC follow/enforce? Since we can't get the BNC to register with a prohibition against mandatory fees, the NYGB might be interested in subsidizing this instead. Quinn, far from being opposed to mandatory fees, claimed they were customary.

[I think there is a misunderstanding on someone's part here. It's been customary to give the BNC a dollar for a number as long as I've been around, but none have ever insisted on a donation. Sounds like the BNC side sees "prohibition of mandatory fees" and ignores the word "mandatory," thinking that you propose a ban on all donations. You on the other hand seem too insistent on codifying tradition into regulation. Why not relax and wait for a problem to develop before tackling it?]

**(STEPHEN DORNEMAN)** I'd like to take this opportunity to correct a minor, but important, misconception that appeared in *HOL* #12—mainly, Jeff Zarse's assertion that he is the recognized Zarse Number Custodian (ZNC) and your acceptance of Jeff's mistake.

You see, at the most recent meeting of the New England Regional Diplomacy Senate (NERDS), it was brought before the Executive Board that Zarse, by issuing less than 1 ZNC in all of 1986, had not fulfilled his obligations as ZNC under the NERDS Charter. Therefore, as empowered to by § 3.85, Paragraph 666 of the Charter, a vote was taken by the Senate to remove (by force, if necessary) Zarse as the ZNC. Due to inclement weather, Bruce Lindsey, Mark Matuschak, and Ernie Hakey of the Diplomacy Union of Massachusetts Publishers (DUMP), as well as Jim Burgess of the Providence Union of Boobs (PUB) were unable to attend, but the NERDS Charter specifically does *not* require any number of members to be present, only that a meeting be held, to pass resolutions. (Zarse, of course, as the subject of the motion was excluded from the vote as per the by-laws.)

I followed proper Robert's Rules of Order in electing the only member present, myself, as the new ZNC Under the Charter. All applications for Zarse Numbers should be sent directly to me.

Thank you for allowing me this forum to correct this potentially confusing situation.

[You're welcome, Steve, glad to help. May I have a ZN, please?]

## Dipcon

**(JOHN CARUSO)** Somehow, Dick, I see your point about not setting up a rotation for Worldcon site selection in a Worldcon Charter. However, I also see the need for just such regulation to ensure that one portion of the world doesn't hog the Worldcon all to itself year after year. I will tell you one thing, if such a con is organized and established,



having it every other year will just about "guarantee" that it will be monopolized by one or two areas of the World—namely, the UK and the USA. And that would be unfair to the rest of the dippy players in the World.

Oh, I have no idea if Birmingham is the most depressing city (or one of the most) in England, (though I do remember my days as a fighter pilot during WWII while I was stationed there, and to tell you the truth, the buildings were all gutted and looked pretty bombed out then, not to mention that the people were very war-like and untrusting of strangers), but I do take exception to Mark Berch calling November a "dreary month." It is not dreary! Leaves are very colorful reds, yellows, and browns, the grass is manageably short, and the weather is somewhat comfortable. Besides, I was born in November. How dare he insult all of the Scorpions of the World by calling November "dreary."

[Perhaps I'm depending too much on Worldcon organizers' good sense not to just hog the tournament in one place. After all, if Britain or the US votes to keep the con every year, it's not much of a World con anymore, and will deservedly lose support.

[I'm sure no insult was intended by Mark (except, perhaps, in your case where one would be justified).

[Birmingham wasn't so bad compared to London. We used to fly over London in our B17s on the way to bomb U-boat bases, and it was the pits (literally). I always liked fall in England because all the leaves turned *orange*. Made me feel right at home!]

**(SIMON BILLENNESS)** I think you're in a minority in your support for a British Dipcon bid. From what I've read in British zeens, even a majority of Brits are wary about trying for Dipcon. The opinion of myself and the Manorcon organizers is that bidding for Dipcon would be unsuccessful and would also cause a lot of transatlantic bad feeling. As a result, the idea of a British bid for Dipcon has been dropped and we intend to turn our attention to establishing a "Diplomacy Worldcon."

The event is still in the initial planning stages, but details are beginning to firm up. Manorcon/Diplomacy Worldcon will take place in July 1988, though the exact date and the venue is, as yet, uncertain. The organizers would like to move the con out of Birmingham; Brighton, Oxford, Cambridge, and even London have been suggested as alternatives. Richard Walkerdine seems to prefer a more "historic" site (like Oxford or Cambridge) and a

university location, which will help to keep the accommodation costs low.

I'm going to be the contact for the event in North America. I'm hoping to have a fixed date and venue by October/November so that I can publicize the event well in advance. I'm also going to look into the possibility of air-fare pooling and discounts, to see if any money can be saved that way.

I disagree with John [Caruso] about holding Diplomacy Worldcon every year. If a Worldcon was held every year, I suspect less people would bother to attend a Worldcon abroad if they knew they could go to one in their own country a year after. One of the main ideas behind holding a Diplomacy Worldcon is to persuade a few people to make the trip abroad. A two-year gap between Worldcons, I feel, will contribute to the special nature of the con as well as giving hobby people plenty of time to plan and save in advance.

While Britain and North America is hardly the world in the global sense, it is the world when you consider postal Diplomacy. Only in Britain and North America is there a strong tradition of postal Diplomacy conventions. There was a Eurocon in Holland last year, but it wasn't a proper residential convention since all the out-of-town people stayed at the homes of the locals. I haven't even heard of a convention in Australia yet, though I suspect they are a few years behind the Continental Europeans in terms of numbers and organization. I'd love to see Diplomacy Worldcon expand to include Continental Europe and Australia, but there needs to be enough convention infrastructure first.

I'm in favor of drawing up a "Diplomacy Worldcon Charter" similar in scope to the "Dipcon Charter." Hopefully we can thrash out most of the basics of this in *Globetrotter*. The main issues in contention so far are whether the con should be held every year or every two years, and where it should be held. My view is that it should be biannual and held in Britain and North America until other areas are ready to franchise in. What do you think?

[I think it should be held in Britain first, and then move on to more exotic locales. Use the Worldcon to *promote* Dipdom, instead of the other way around. If only thirty people show up, no big deal. That's the other reason I'd like to see it every year—you can afford to take more chances that way. Once every two years and each one has to be good and go to the "highest bidder."

[In fact, I'd think the Brits would be eager to see the con in Europe to give them an excuse for an adventure. Having it in England might be more convenient, but not nearly as much fun.



[What's wrong with staying in houses, as long as there's room for everybody? Given the choice between staying in a dorm or someone's house I'd pick the house every time (particularly in a foreign country).]

**(PETER SULLIVAN)** A "Worldcon charter"? Simon has obviously been involved in the US hobby for too long! First off, I think that it is important for a Worldcon to avoid the wranglings over the charter which seem to affect Dipcon. More importantly, the charter would have no legal foundation; if it is drawn up under American law, it wouldn't be binding when Worldcon was in Britain, and vice versa. Although I doubt it would ever get that far, the courts have no international jurisdiction. Why set up unenforceable rules?

Just have, say, one Worldcon custodian from each participating nation who collectively decide on the rotation, bringing in new custodians for other countries. (This would allow us to extend the currently necessary but limited USA/US/Europe rotation, as other areas become capable of supporting the event.)

I think it would be better to have Worldcon every other year rather than annually. Some people will want to get to *every* Worldcon, and having them each year might prove too much of a financial drag on them. And, as you said about Dipcon, Dick, missing it out for a year may help keep up interest in it.

Can I ask Mark Berch what's wrong with Birmingham? Has he ever been there? At least it's not such a tourist trap as, say, Brighton.

[I'm not so sure that the Dipcon charter is a "legal" document *per se*, though it is generally considered as "the law" of Dipcon. I think a set of guidelines and maybe a statement of purpose should be plenty sufficient for Worldcon—the less bureaucracy the better.

[How would we even know if someplace like Australia or Japan would be "capable" of supporting a Worldcon? For all we know, Japan might have 10,000 postal Dippers and we just don't hear about them. There might also be several parallel postal Dip hobbies in the US/UK/Europe that we don't know about, though I admit they probably aren't that large.]

**(STEVE EMMERT)** Put me in column B with those who won't go to England for a con, as I'd be too busy soaking up all the history. (Personally, I'm waiting for someone to host GenghisCon. I'll go to

that, even if it's in some faraway place such as, say, Aruba.) On the whole, Dip players simply do not have the wherewithal to go jetting around all the time just to play the game. Unless the cost of air travel plummets (maybe that's a bad choice of words), the only consistent method of intercontinental gaming is and will be postal. I'd like to believe otherwise, but I don't. Alas that a postal tournament is unworkable. It is, isn't it?

[The last one didn't work out very well, for a variety of reasons. Maybe the next one will fare better, having learned from prior mistakes.

[GenghisCon at my house next summer. See you there?]

**(MALCOLM SMITH)** For my money, Dipcon ought to remain in the USA. But there is no reason why there shouldn't be a Worldcon circulating around various countries who show sufficient interest. The "obvious three" centres of the Hobby are the US (why can't a Worldcon go there?), the UK, and in Europe.

Europe. That's one hell of a place. For a start, I would like to see Worldcon visit Scandinavia as this place is huge (for example, the distance from Oslo-Tromsø is the same as Oslo-Rome, and Tromsø is nowhere near the top). There's hundreds of gamers here in Norway and Sweden, as I'm slowly discovering, and I hope that we can get Worldcon to come here.

I also gather that Australia has a large-ish hobby, so perhaps it can go there one year. If Worldcon does the huge trip of US, UK, Europe, Scandinavia, Australia (not to mention others—why not a few stops in Europe?), then at least it would help in uniting all our Hobbies. But Dipcon is America and ought to stay there. It was suggested to me at Dipcon last year that I ought to bid for Oslo in '87, but it was a daft idea. It's like putting Midcon in San Diego.

Besides, if any Americans or Canadians want to play in a tournament abroad, then they can do what I did for the past two years: save up, hop on a plane, and play in whatever convention is going on in your host's country.

[Midcon in San Diego, hmm?...don't let Larry hear thoughts like that!]

**(LARRY PEERY)** Personally, I think the Brits should host a Worldcon, and I also hope the Australians get into it. I hope somebody, someday, will make a serious attempt to contact someone in the



South American hobby so we can link up with the players in Argentina. Anybody out there fluent in Spanish? Hummm, the President of Argentina is going to be here in San Diego in a couple of weeks. Maybe...Nah, I don't have a tux that fits anymore.

I think anyone who can put on a good con and do it consistently will find the world beating a path to their door, be it in Fredericksburg, San Diego, or Tasmania. And don't bother about what you call it.

**(ROBERT SACKS)** I suppose if you must hold a World Dipcon, you will, but there are a couple of flaws with the proposal as Billenness outlined: (1) when North America is eligible, other conventions besides Dipcon should be eligible. (2) the original charter has been deliberately misinterpreted, and in some cases "edited," to allow the administrative committee a strangle-hold on the organization to the exclusion of bidders who are not interested in dealing with a high-handed administrative committee.

**(BRUCE LINSEY)** In retrospect, I think I was wrong to support the idea of holding Dipcon in Britain. The Worldcon idea seems much better to me now, with Dipcon keeping its status as the main North American event. So consider my stance reversed on this matter.

**(ALAN STEWART)** I think there is about a 33% chance of a Toronto bid for Dipcon in the next three years. We have more than enough raw talent to organize both the bid and the con. What we need is one or two young bloods to show an active and intense interest in getting it. I wouldn't organize such a bid myself because of the danger of my burning out before the time the con was held. It would be kind of amusing though—people show up for a well-advertised con and find nothing—the place where it is supposed to be held has never heard of it, phone calls to the supposed organizers are simply unanswered, etc.

Rotating "Worldcons" are the best solution to the question.

[That's what I like about you, Alan, you're not above contemplating some good destructive fun!

[Go ahead and organize a Dipcon bid. If the Madlads can run one, surely you level-headed Canadians can pull it off. And the likelihood of your burning out before the con comes off is no greater than for anybody else. Is it?]

**(MELINDA HOLLEY)** Personally, I don't care

one way or the other about holding Dipcon somewhere else than North America. (Has it ever been held in Canada?) I can see that it would be nice for Dipcon to have an international flavor, but it would be very difficult to organize it. From what I've heard, Dipcon is somewhat difficult to organize. Can you imagine adding international problems? Language, currency, passports, transportation, etc.

[I have enough trouble getting to work in the morning. I try not to contemplate other logistical problems, thank you.]

**(RUSS RUSNAK)** I am rather surprised that I never heard anything about Marycon this year. I figured I would be on the mailing list because of last year. I had really hoped to go. I was planning on driving my mother to Baltimore to visit her brother and then going the rest of the way if possible. If something does get screwed up regarding Marycon, is there any chance you will make a last-minute bid for Madison? You can witness the return of Bill Becker. Even in his has-been state, he is still worth more than the whole of the ECC.

I'm surprised to see Sacks still whining about Dipcon in Madison. After all, it's been over a year since that was settled. Besides, he is the one that didn't make arrangements for someone to present the bid. If his presentation or what he would have put on would be better than Madison, plenty of people will judge, but nobody will ever be sure. The important thing is that people who travel to Madison will remember it as an enjoyable weekend. I definitely wish those that are putting the thing together all the best. This is the first time I have ever really felt like an outsider with that crowd.

[As you know by now, Marycon didn't happen this year because the organizers "forgot." Look for it to be back again next year. After all, most of the gang is still interested in Dip—I think they just wanted a summer off for a change. How was Madison? What little I've heard has been favorable.]

## Diptax

**(JOHN CARUSO)** I noticed that the NYGB is committed to funding six services (which it falsely claims are hobbywide services), four of which are run by Robert Sacks in direct competition with Dipdom's services. The other two are the BNC, which the NYGB no longer will support unless the BNC signs a "deal" to give away his independent status, and MOD, which already charges a "fee" and



therefore is in violation of NYGB Directive IIb 217.9A, as Dick Martin correctly pointed out, and no doubt will soon be deleted from the funding ranks. Why do I even bother to bring this up? Simply to point out that the only "services" the NYGB funds are those directly controlled by Robert Sacks.

[I have the impression that's due to a lack of suitable volunteers as much as anything. I seem to recall the orphan service getting some NYGB funds, too, and there may be more in the near future. Stay tuned.]

[Robert has frequently claimed that his only condition to receive funding is prohibition of *mandatory* fees. Giving away independent status is billed as "negotiable."]

(ROBERT SACKS) I am amazed that Billenness would so misrepresent the situation. The separate funding for *KGO'ZD* was enacted at his insistence when we were negotiating for him to take it over, negotiations which he severed when he couldn't impose his will on an independent democratic body. As he knew from my letter to him of 25 February, I am not the next MNC, and 10 Miller Numbers were assigned, 5 of which are used, and 2 more acknowledged by the GM. He seems to be under the mistaken impression that I am allocating the funds, yet I informed him that it was a group decision; indeed, he should have copies of the proposal which was circulated at his insistence and adopted to give the present distribution. If my memory is correct, the old distribution excluded *KGO'ZD*, and only funded *MoD* if the BNC didn't register. I do not draw funds for my projects in excess of expenses, which was also in the letter. Scott Hanson is discussing taking over as Director of Orphan Games.

[Unfortunately, not much of this makes sense to me. Why should the BNC registering have anything to do with *MOD*, for instance?

[One reason the NYGB "democratic body" is viewed with skepticism is that you are the *only* visible member of it.]

(ALAN STEWART) Do you want me to keep on plugging this idea? The topic doesn't provoke much of a discussion, strictly speaking, since 99% of the hobby is against it, but we do get to see who can express their opposition most colorfully.

I wouldn't advocate making Diptax mandatory in the sense that you wouldn't get a BN if you didn't remit it. It should evolve into something that everybody simply "does" automatically, with no sanctions involved except peer pressure, ideally pressure only

of a positive kind, *i.e.*, encouraging others to participate rather than slamming those who do not.

I never realized before that we are living in the midst of a hobby renaissance marked by a shift of public attention to those topics Simon is most interesting in. *Mirabile dictu!* I guess that makes Simon the hobby's true Renaissance Man.

I was delighted to see that *MOD* is being laser printed in the future—that's what you implied, I believe. Printing quality was the only serious defect of the first edition.

[Yes, *MOD* is laser printed. Not perfect though, as Woody managed to mix up a couple of the pages. Still...a very nice effort. (As usual, when hobby ineptness rears its ugly head, Woody is first to take the blame.)

[As you can see from the Announcements, Simon not only is our Renaissance Man, he's the whole Renaissance! Really, things have been going very well lately and if Simon would like to take credit that's fine with me. But if he thinks I'm going to start referring to Dipdom as Billennessdom then he's got another thing coming....]

## Filing Systems

(MALCOLM SMITH) I still haven't found the system with which I'm happy. The major problem is that in my job there is every chance that I'll get shoved abroad for a length of some period. For example, I was whisked off to Belgium at the start of the year for two months, and if I didn't put my foot down I'd be there still.

Even though I've a bloody good computer system, it becomes a little difficult to whisk the thing (daisy wheel printer, dot matrix printer, disk drives, keyboard, etc) about with me, so I travel with a trusty portable and a pile of index cards. I've had a few problems with my machine in the past. I know that if my machine dies again, I can always publish with the typewriter and the pile of 3x5 cards.

I save everything that comes in and then sort it out into the following: personal letters (from friends), financial letters, and then all the *BR* letters get sorted out according to whether they go into the "general file," game order file, or whatever.

I save every magazine I get—after nine years of being in the Hobby, I'm glad I've cut my trades down—I've no space left!

[We have a big enough basement to fit a few more boxes of zeens yet, though we rarely do much



letter sorting anymore.

[And I like to live dangerously: if the computer ever goes you may never hear from me again!]

**(WALLACE NICOLL)** Filing? Huh, what's that...each issue of *PoW* gets its own folder for letters, articles, zeen originals, reductions, etc. After a year I ditch the letters. Artwork is spreading out of its folder across the floor and up over the in/out trays. The "next issue" prepared pages file lies nearby. The subber/address list is on disc and in a loose leaf binder. My games live in another loose leaf binder in plastic wallets. Games I'm in get a folder each for maps, letters, etc. When the game ends most of that goes. I don't keep extensive files on other players, etc. The zeens all have their own library periodical cases—home-made from cutdown breakfast cereal packs!

[With a system like that you want us to think you're disorganized? I save the master copies for the zeen, back issues until they run out, and orders, etc jumbled in a box. I am far too lazy to sort out all the junk letters no matter how long they've been sitting around.]

**(PETE GAUGHAN)** I keep *everything* that's current, except warehouse zeens like *Graustark*. When I stop getting a zeen, I weigh it (metaphorically) against the majority of the hobby. The biggest deciding factor is: do I talk about this zeen/editor/game to other Dip players? Using this, I have saved: *Diplomacy by Moonlight*, *North Sealth West George* (in fact, these two I still get out, and reread, and show off to Cathy and Tom!), *KK/W*, *EE*, *Dip Digest*, *Electric Penguin*, *Inner Light*, *30 Miles*, *Snafu*, and *Xenogolic*.

[You toss out *Graustark* as a "warehouse" zeen? Gee, I think it's got some of the best writing going—but I like stuff like *The Reign of Senilio the Great*. I still keep my *Inner Light* folder in the active bunch upstairs, even though it's been gone for a couple years. Short lived, but one of my all-time faves.]

**(STEVE LANGLEY)** There is a difference in mentality between those who enjoy archivism and those who don't. A serious lack, no doubt, in my case. I find I buy more books than I read, and barely have time to squeeze in reading those zeens that I get. I rarely reread a book (a pleasure for those who do, I know) and have no desire to ever reread a dip-zeen. I sort of stack the incoming on a shelf of my

bedside bookcase and try to read whatever is on top before it's buried by later arrivals. When the shelf fills (marked by my inability to cram more in or frequent overflow onto the floor), I transfer the contents to a paper bag and drop it in the dumpster. There is little order in my life except that which I impose on it, and, as many have said of me, I'm not a very imposing kind of guy.

[I end up rereading zeens during my occasional fits of rearranging, and some stand up really well. Viewing some of them with hindsight is quite often enlightening or unintentionally hilarious.]

**(ALAN STEWART)** My filing system for zeens has continued to evolve. First I only had one big box. Then I went out and bought ten or so brown cardboard containers of the kind that house periodicals in public libraries. Then I dumped the box onto the floor and began to file the zeens in the cartons. Then I found out I hadn't bought enough cartons of the right size. I sorted about one-third of the zeens into the cartons. Then I discovered I didn't have any convenient place to store the cartons. Then I got tired of sorting and went on to something else. A few weeks later I decided to put the unsorted mess back into the box to get it off the floor. Then I started a new box, in the living room, for zeens I want to refer to (to answer, or whatever) in the near future. Now I have zeens everywhere and still can't find anything.

[You have achieved the ultimate filing system: total immersion.]

## Finding New Subbers

**(STEVE EMMERT)** I was interested to read Dorneman's relating of the story of his FRP subbers who had never heard of postal Dip. Until reading his letter, I had never heard of postal FRP games, and even now can't imagine how the deuce it would work. (Magic Realm aside, of course, Dick.)

[Of course! Magic Realm works just fine, by the way.]

[Postal FRP takes a lot of work and imagination to do well. And it's certainly not possible to do "standard" things like dungeon adventures with a group of players. The *role* playing far outweighs the *roll* playing, and many players just don't adjust.]

**(STEPHEN DORNEMAN)** You call unsolicited samples "ineffective" for picking up new



subscribers, with a response rate of something "under 20%." Simon Billenness distributed about 2,000 flyers to get 200 responses for *20 Years On* (10%) and calls flyer distributions "not as productive" as other means of advertisement. Based on my real world work in Direct Mail and Newspaper Insert advertising, I'd say you've struck a gold mine! Rule-of-thumb for totally unsolicited ("junk") mailings is that 1/10th of 1% (1 response out of 1000) is typical. If you have a preferred mailing list (previous customers of your business, like Bruce Linsey's mailing of the Dip flyer to game store customers), you shouldn't expect better than a 1% response. (I'll be he gets about 20 responses.) Even "specialized" mailing lists, like sending free copies of *Yachting* magazine to members of a yacht club, don't expect better than a 10% response, as Simon obtained. So keep sending out those samples—your product obviously sells itself.

My initial mailing, by the way, was 150 copies of *Penguin Dip* #0, a flyer announcing the upcoming publishing of the zeen. I received about 20 responses. I had 100 issues of #s 1, 2, and 3 printed up, sending the extras out as samples, and my subber list rose to 40, then 50, now up to about 60 as I'm preparing for #4. The only advertising I've used so far are the samples, and unsolicited plugs in other zeens (particularly *Politesse* and *Cathy's Ramblings*) brought in a few more subbers. I see a leveling off in the number of Dipdom subscribers, but I hope to continue to grow by adding other non-Dip gamers and non-gaming SF fans to the mailing list. I'll probably print 200 copies of *PD* #5 and give a lot away at Origins. And raise my sub rates at the same time. (Even if Bill Salvatore does think I'm a Nice Boy.)

[The figures I saw said that anything better than one half percent response to an initial mailing of a typical non-Dip newsletter is considered wonderful. Unfortunately, our mass mailings are prohibitively expensive. How much of a response did you get from Origins? One or two zeens evidently recruited fairly well.]

**(MICHAEL HOPCROFT)** I don't want 300 subbers for myself (think of all that addressing and stapling! AARGH!); I'll just be happy if I get enough to run all my games. But I'm undetermined about whether it's better to push new people to subscribe or whether you should wait for them to come to you. You might be waiting a long time. But it you push, they might resent it and not come in at all. It's hard to say whether any of my efforts at promotion have been particularly effective. I'm at the stage

right now where I'm trading with people and have a few paid subscribers to keep me going until next issue.

Before I was a publisher, I always checked every issue of the *Zeen Register* without fail every month. (I was printing a DOCTOR WHO fanzeen at the time—and still am.) If I saw a zeen whose concept intrigued me, I would write to them. And, of course, I'd figure it out and it would come in over a reasonable sub load for a welfare budget. The only zeen I remember whose ad actually led to a sale was Greg Ellis' *Feuilletonist's Forum*. (Or however that's spelled; I am, above all else, a lousy typist.) But the *Register* is still a valuable tool if you can get the right hook; it's basically a question of presenting something appealing enough that people will want to send for a sample. (In my case, just starting out with no firm footing or set audience, that hook had better be pretty darn good!)

Unsolicited samples have been, in my case, probably a waste of time; I worry about my zeens going to good homes; so far I've attracted polite interest, but little support. I have one guy who told me he would pay, but he can't—that's when I decided on sub credit for articles. I'm not in this to make money. If I cared about money, I'd find another field, like garden care. I'd like to have enough paid subscribers to meet my immediate costs, but I know that there's only so much recruiting I can do directly, and that soon they'll have to start coming to me. I'm still waiting for my first letter saying, "Please, oh please, send me a sample!" I think I'll frame it on my wall....

£? £? £? I'm trying, Robert, but it isn't going so hot. My equipment is primitive in some aspects, in others, merely obsolete.

[Gee, your equipment seemed to do just fine....

[My personal opinion is that you shouldn't worry too much about getting lots of new subbers right off. Rather, take your time and grow to a level you feel comfortable with. Even fifty subbers is a lot if you have any sort of communication with them outside the zeen. Don't worry, keep putting out a good zeen and you'll find an audience. If you *do* look for more subbers, why not check out unusual places and find new people? Trades are a good idea, and writing for/to the zeens you trade with is a cheap way to let people know you exist.

[You mean my "Pretty yellow covers" ad in the *ZR* didn't make you want to rush out and get a sample *Retal*?]

**(MALCOLM SMITH)** This is tough—I've had a pile of problems with UK editors in the past



who've done nothing better than to cast aspersions upon myself and my magazine. The net result is that I haven't been able to get many new subbers. Anyhow, I've got about 65 subscribers from all over the globe. The only problem is when I move overseas (I'm calling Norway home) for company business and I have to pack up my typewriter and 3x5 index cards. Hand-writing 65 (at present) printer labels isn't any fun, although my machine does it for me now. If I get to my old record of 218 subscribers again, I'll be in trouble.

Anyhow, I'm finding it pretty hard to get new subscribers in the UK, despite the fact that my magazine is the most regular magazine I see. But, after living in Norway for a year, I'm starting to gather a base of Norwegian subscribers—all new blood for the Hobby.

But, how does one find new subscribers? I haven't a clue, but I'd like some more, that's for certain.

[The best thing for you to do may be to look in unusual places, and living in Norway and Belgium that should be no problem. That seems to be the way you're headed right now, and that seems to be a good idea—I find the new blood a lot more vigorous and interesting than the old blood, anyway.]

**(WALLACE NICOLL)** As for new subbers, the most effective way we've found is the direct mailing. As an alternative, we had a number of enquiries after a review in one of the pro FRP magazines which carried a postal games column. We're also considering advertising through one of the pro PBM companies—for a lot of space in *PoW* in return.

We placed flyers in gameshops locally, but found they got used for scribbling on, mainly because they weren't prominently enough displayed. Must get round to doing something similar for *PoW* and placing it in the local game shop notice-board. I'll let you know how that works if I do it.

With the UK hobby so much biased towards University educated, the Uni games and wargames clubs are an ideal source for new blood.

[Let me know how the pro advertisement works out. From what I understand there seems to be a vast, largely untapped, supply of players out there playing in the professional games.]

**(LARRY PEERY)** As for Finding New Subbers: There is a lot that can be done, both inexpensively and expensively. The question is: what do you do with them when you find them?

Well, I hate to be a spoilsport since everyone else is talking about what we should and shouldn't do, but I've found a little work will go a long way. The US Naval Institute publishes a fine zeen calling *Proceedings* which has a 100,000+ circulation, including about 85,000 military officers. Last year when I did the Naval Strategy theme issue, I sent them a copy because I had lifted the theme from their zeen. They thanked me. Then I got a letter asking if we had anyone who wanted to do a crossword puzzle based on that naval quiz we ran. They would pay \$250 or so for the puzzle and run it with a credit to *DW*. Then I got a request for a copy of *Diplomacy* from their book editor who wants to review it in their zeen. That went off to Tom Shaw at Avalon Hill. I sent the crossword request to Scott Marley who is now crossword puzzle editor for *Games* with a request he do the puzzle, and send a copy of *DW* off to their editor for review. I'm also suggesting to Rex Martin that he approach Tom Shaw with the idea of sending a few copies of *The General* and a few A-H games to the officers wardrooms of the major US warships (carriers, etc) and perhaps some of the Navy hospitals. Anyone will tell you that wargames are popular on these ships, and that that is what a lot of sailors spend their time doing. If A-H made up 50 or 100 such packages and sent them out, I'm sure they'd get a good response and a lot of free publicity from things like the *Proceedings*, etc. So, because a nail was found, we may end up with a lot of publicity. It just takes some imagination and follow up, and not a lot of talking. You have to grasp the opportunity when it arises. And no, I'm not slighting enlisted men, either, but they'll buy what they want.

Note that I asked everyone who gets *DW* to send me a copy of the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the game/toy stores in their local yellow pages. I'll probably get few responses, but it is a start. Eventually, I'd like to compile a list of all the toy and game stores in the major US/Canadian metro areas. Most major cities have a library or phone company office that has all the yellow pages for most cities. The question is, is anyone willing to take the time to do that kind of nitty-gritty work? No, probably not. They want to do something glamorous and put their name all over it. We could do wonders with such a list, but again, it takes work. Anyway, please encourage your readers to help me out in this department. When I get the list I intend to put it in the *BBB*.

I just did a rough estimate of all the new names I've gotten about *Diplomacy* from all the sources available to me. It runs over 700 names. Good grief. And that's since New Year's.



[Well, when I find new blood the first thing I do is get them in a game, writing and participating. From there it's up to them.]

[You know, I think San Diego is a major city that would have a library or phone company office that has all the yellow pages for most cities. If you'd like those addresses....]

**(ROBERT SACKS)** I am getting requests for *KGO*, presumably from the flyer Peel prepared for me that I placed in the principal NYC game store. I wish Peel would add *KGO* to all the flyers, not just mine. (Tonight I even got a phone call based on the flyer.) The entire point about the flyer is to connect novices to the novice zeens (and other sources of info)—no novice zeen, no flyer.

[Glad the flyer seems to be working for somebody.]

**(BRUCE LINSEY)** That 2000-copy mailing that Ken Peel described still, as of late April, hasn't gone out. The game store in Pittsfield is still in the process of becoming established, and will be attempting to go with monthly mailings once they are. I have asked them to put Simon, Ken, and me on their mailing list, so Ken will know it whenever his flyer hits the mails *en masse*.

Still not a single response to the flyer on the store's bulletin board, though I haven't visited there in a while and don't know whether it's still there.

**(PETE GAUGHAN)** Report on samples: 53 unsolicited samples to novices: no response. 21 samples to people who've played or published for at least 18 months: 7 new subscribers. And every one of those 7 subbed because they signed up for a game. I did actually get a response from a novice, but only because we're both in a gamestart together—he said he didn't respond because *Pere* is too expensive.

The Peel postal flyer has been in three stores for six weeks now: no response.

**(ALAN STEWART)** If Ken sends me a copy of the flyer I will go, in person, to the two Toronto games stores and ask them to display it. One may be a problem as it doesn't have much available counter space or a bulletin board. The other one should go OK, I think. One of the stores sells the Avalon Hill version of *Dip*, which I don't think is supposed to be on sale in Canada. Should I turn them in?

John Caruso mentions that I've gotten *MOD*'s chronology wrong. Does he mean that I said that

*MOD* was a reaction to *Supernova*, while it wasn't done until much later? My understanding was that *MOD* was published out of dissatisfaction with *Supernova* and/or its publisher. How could I have gotten such an absurd idea? Just shows how isolated from the mainstream we Canadians are.

*The Canadian Diplomat* has many more than six games and openings on a regular basis, and *Sleepless Knights* did both for a long while, although Dave Carter has temporarily halted new openings.

I don't and didn't wish to lay any claim to "inventing" the game store idea. I'm sure lots of people have thought of it—some other Toronto people also "thought" of it independently to promote our local FTF group—but credit goes, of course, not to those who "thought" of it, but to those who actually did something about it.

**(RUSS RUSNAK)** All of the methods that were advanced about finding new subbers seemed as though they could be effective in finding new members. I can't understand why people would argue which is best. They should just be used as the situation arises.

[Yes, though some methods seem to be more effective than others.]

## GMing Procedure

**(ANDY LISCHETT)** Bob Olsen is right that it is wrong for GMs to announce who has submitted orders for an upcoming season, but he is wrong that it is picky. I want my opponents as much in the dark as possible.

Telling the players individually that you do or don't have orders from them is probably a good idea, possibly saving them each 22 cents and saving a wee bit of wear-and-tear on those cute little Jeeps the Post Office uses.

I don't like the WAP rule, not because it is or isn't irregular, but because it will protect and prolong sloppy playing. Games will slow down and players will lose interest.

Generally, players who NMR frequently put a minimum of effort into writing orders and negotiating, and WAP will help them last longer so that their lack of interest can infect other players. Even if a standby takes over, the minimum effort usually continues because (1) that is what most standbys do, and (2) NMRers usually NMR out *after* running the country into the ground (regardless of how long it takes, but setting a maximum number of NMRs could offset this).



Anyway, why should a GM want this rule? I'd much rather see uncared-for centers go to players interested in using them.

[If WAP is going to "protect and prolong sloppy playing," doesn't allowing an NMR unit to retreat if dislodged do the same thing? If a player's going to drop out, they tend to do it no matter how well they are doing or at the first sign of adversity. Since WAP still permits the quick replacement of dropping players, how does this lead to a slower game or one that is less interesting? It seems somewhat far-fetched to imagine that a player will send in orders every other turn and do well enough to survive, WAP or not.

[Who's to say that the poor standby player wouldn't be interested in those centers? Having a little better position might inspire more interest from the standby, too. It seems harsh to say that standby players put little effort into the game while making sure they don't have much to work with.]

**(PETER SULLIVAN)** Hey, we've been giving numbers to face-to-face games for years. The last BNC, Pete Calcraft, invented "Jackdaw numbers," which were given to ftf games (mainly those of the Birmingham University Diplomacy Society), "irregular" postal games, and postal Diplomacy variations like Fleet Rome. As far as I know, the Jackdaw file is currently in limbo after the crash of the stats service and the rescuing of the BNs by Richard Walkerdine. We also keep records of tournament games.

As for my standby policy, I don't hold the game over every time someone NMR!s—just when they drop out. It's one of the drawbacks of the American system that an NMR! does so often lead to a drop-out—why should the player of record bother with all the hard work of recovering from an NMR! when there's a standby already appointed and presumably willing to step in? Under my system, the new player is not standing by in case of another NMR!, he's taking over after the previous player has definitely been chucked. As such, they are "stand-in" rather than "stand-by" players. So far, the regular game I'm running is up to 1907, and I've had three player changes. One dropped out, one resigned with orders so there was no delay, and one left such a small position behind that I didn't bother with a stand-in (yeah, I know I should've). Compare this to a typical US game when there would have been at least three delays so that the players could play winter separately.

**(ROBERT SACKS)** My policy is not "anonymous standby"—I do not name standbys at all, I call for volunteers to submit orders. If the player misses his moves, the first eligible person to submit orders has the position. Technically the standby doesn't exist until he becomes the player of record, but I suppose I would forward letters, but...if the player of record submits his orders, am I supposed to send the letter to him or not?

[It would seem reasonable that you forward to the standby only unless the player specifies that you forward to the player of record. I suppose you couldn't say where the letter was sent either, if you want to be technical about it.]

**(BRUCE LINSEY)** In response to Bob Olsen's question about the GM who announces during a separated winter season which players have spring orders on file, I agree that this is questionable at best and wouldn't do it myself. However, it's legit if announced beforehand in the houserules and players sign up knowing that the GM is going to do it.

I've got another poser for you. John Boardman uses a procedure in *Graustark* that I really think constitutes interference. What John will do is type up an adjudication before the deadline, and then if a change of orders comes in, he'll note it elsewhere in the issue. Thus, if Italy was about to stab France, but changed his mind, there's a chance France will know this, thanks to the GM. My personal belief is that this is wrong. I realize, however, that if John's players don't object, then he has the right to do things this way. But I wouldn't play under such a procedure. Anyone else have an opinion on this?

[I have no problem with it, and have been playing there for nine years. Players realize (or ought to) that it's tough enough to send out the adjudications for a game on deadline day, much less sixteen of them (on mimeo, to boot). We make allowances.

[But what if the BNC decides he agrees with you, and that this *is* interference, and all of Boardman's games will be irregular? Should the BNC have the power to suddenly decide that a long-standing practice (in this case perhaps predating the BNC) is "improper" merely because somebody finally complains about it?

[My understanding is that you won't play under any procedure, so why bring that up?]

**(STEVE LANGLEY)** Someone mentioned starting a discussion of the Mark Berch Auto-Pilot rule. Personally, I feel that it creates a whole lot of



extra work for the GM, but any GM who doesn't mind digging through the previous couple of seasons to determine which units hold and which move should be allowed to do so. I see no real reason for ruling such games irregular, although the whole thing strikes me as verging on being a variant. The rule certainly leaves more room for GM error than a simple "all units hold," but again, it's up to the GM to decide whether he wants to take the chance of making a mistake.

[I don't see it making for a whole lot of extra work, or suddenly cause errors to spring up. No, I shouldn't say that—most of my errors have been when players ordered units they didn't have from the wrong provinces. It is a pain to have to track units though, and having a move like A Ber-Mun be valid one season and not the next, even though there's an army in Ber both times, seems perverse. Simply resubmit last turn's moves as preliminary for the next season.]

**(ALAN STEWART)** Change of houserules during games: I think it's important to note that Bill Quinn's last BNCing decision establishes firmly that an "important" change in houserules during a game may render a game irregular. (Dennis Agosta changed to a "prophetic retreat" policy early in his games.) Beware!

I agree with Bob Olsen's analysis of GM publication of who already has orders in. I stick a line in the adjudication, "I do \_\_\_\_\_ do not \_\_\_\_\_ have spring 'xx orders from you" and check the appropriate box only in the copy going to the player.

I agree with John Caruso's analysis of HR changes (gee, what an agreeable guy I am.)

The Berch Continuation-of-campaign rule (known to some people as WAP, which sounds to me like an ethnic slur) has been declared regular except that it cannot be used for builds and removals. Have fun with your discussion of it—I'll be opening a game with it, but I'd just as soon stay out of the discussion unless I see something demanding a reply. I almost got myself into big trouble on that issue already and don't wish to press my luck.

[Is there any hint as to where we should draw the line at what would be a "significant" HR change, and what would not? It seems curious to me that changing from one perfectly regular method of running a game to another would make a game irregular. Two rights make a wrong?

[The BNC ruling on WAP didn't impress me in the least. Far too rambling and indecisive. The impression it left on me was that WAP was fine so

long as it has no impact on the game (like if a major power NMRs, say?). Big help!]

**(MELINDA HOLLEY)** Dick, you're the only person who could possibly say that I'm in the fewest games. I think I do standbys the same way you do. I first look at who's in the least number of games, then check to see if they've previously been called for that game (or if someone in the game is geographically close to them), then make sure the standby I'm calling hasn't just NMRed in another game. I keep two lists for standbys. One is a master list: name, state, number of games they've been called for. The second list breaks each game down showing who was called for what position. This second list lets me quickly make sure a potential standby hasn't been called for a previous position in the same game.

[Not that you're in the fewest games total, mind you, just less than any of my other standbys in my zeen. Since you'd just started getting it, no surprise! Given a little time, you'll catch up yet.

[I'm not real careful about calling the same person for a different position in the same game if they don't get in the first time. I figure it's a Dip game—times change, situations change, and since so little diplomacy is conducted with standbys that shouldn't be a big deal. Besides, the existence of diplomacy does not necessarily imply its truthfulness. I try not to do it, but no longer go to the trouble of keeping notes about it.]

**(JOHN CARUSO)** Changing your HRs all of the time is one reason I opted to be off of your standby list. Make that the main reason. While I could care less if I win or lose, I do like to know what the rules are and have the game GMed in a consistent fashion. While I like clowning around, including from the GM, I do not like clowning around from the GM when the GM is supposed to be unbiased and performing his GMing functions. How do I know your rule changes weren't because someone browbeat the GM? Like I say, clowning around has its place—but not with regard to the GM performing GMing duties such as adjudicating moves, listing units/builds/etc or changing rules of play arbitrarily.

[The only HR change I've made in the last five years has been to make all votes public, and that only applied to new games, not games in progress. Prior to that, the only significant rule change was to get rid of the interim deadline for builds & retreats



because the players didn't like it. If I invent or change joke houserules, what does it matter?

[If the GM changes the houserules, does that mean he's suddenly biased or no longer performing his GMing functions? Then again, you don't have *any* houserules and run games just fine. If the rules don't change the game, what difference do they (or their absence) make?]

**(RUSS RUSNAK)** In answer to John stating that the rule change would be insignificant, I don't think so. In 1983AJ (the game that gave John Boardman and I such high regard for each other), I went public that I would not accept a five-player DIAS draw. When the fifth person was eliminated, the German convinced his partner that I was still vetoing the thing. As a result, his ally handed him the game rather than continue with me vetoing every draw. If I had been able to make my yes vote public, the game would have been a four-way draw rather than a win. In essence, I wanted to make a point that even a "small" rule change can have a drastic difference in a game. No rule should be changed unless there is unanimous consent of all players, with the possible exception of new houserules because of a new GM.

[It's one thing for a GM to change the HRs, and it's quite another for the players to believe that the rules have changed. For instance, one of my players once got it into his head that I had suddenly changed the rules regarding draws in his game. No amount of proof on my part could show him my side of the story, and to this day he has never forgiven me for something I didn't do!

[To the best of my knowledge, Boardman has never verified or made public any votes during the course of the game. Are you sure you're talking about a rule *change* here? If 83AJ was an orphan game, it seems sensible that the game run under *Graustark* HRs unless there's a compelling reason to do otherwise.

[Sounds to me like the German player pulled a fast one and deserves the win—as he probably vetoed the draw the whole time!]

**(MARK BERCH)** On page 16, John Caruso discusses my War by Automatic Pilot plan (in a nutshell, if a player NMRs, he is charged with an NMR, a standby is called, but instead of using the orders "All Units Hold," the moves from the previous move season are simply used again). He says, "WAP and perpetuals (sometimes called standing orders) are quite similar in that they both reuse a previ-

ous turn's orders...Both of these policies, however, deny the player the chance to negotiate the moves." No, they don't. So long as you have the name and address of the player entitled to submit orders for the position, you have the chance to negotiate. True, the player might not even open your envelope, but that's always the case. Or he might conduct deep negotiation, and then NMR anyway. John continues, "...Only anonymous standbys have caused games to be declared irregular...." Correct, and that is (in my opinion) as it should be. Only anon standbys deny the other players the name and address of the person whose orders may be used, and thus only it should be treated as irregular.

Please keep in mind what WAP changes and what it doesn't. The you-NMRed-so-you-are-listed-as-NMR-and-a-standby-is-called process is left unchanged. WAP addresses a different question: What do we do with these pieces? Previously, there had been three choices: 1. Use S01 neutral orders (if it's S01), 2. Create moves on the basis of General Orders, 3. Use the set of orders, "All Units Hold." WAP simply creates a fourth choice: 4. Reuse the previous orders. Of course there will be people, GMs and players alike, who don't think (4) is best—just as there are those who don't think (1-3) are best. But I argue that WAP has at least the virtue that it gives exactly what the player wrote. It does not rely on orders written by the GM (1), or written by some third party (2), or orders never intended by the player (3).

[If the GM is willing to forward correspondence to an anonymous standby, does that change anything? After all, it *is* possible to conduct diplomacy now. If the GM is unwilling to facilitate communication between his players then that would be cause for alarm, but there is nothing divine about having the actual name and address.

[I see nothing inherently "wrong" with WAP. It's just one of several alternatives, some of which are better than others but none of which is the definitive solution.

[All right, here's one for you: A player has one removal due, but gives you orders to remove two. What do you do?]

[I am sick and tired of these little spaces down in the lower right hand corner of the page that aren't quite big enough to use, and not quite small enough to ignore. So I plan to use the time-honored publisher's trick of rambling on about inconvenient little spaces at the bottom of pages until this one goes away. Then there will be no little space to ramble about, which makes the ramblings unnecessary....]



## Publishers Handbook

**(JOHN CARUSO)** This ought to make all those people like Jeff Zarse, who consider themselves nobody (as he put it) feel 1,000% better, when I inform you all that Bruce Linsey sent me a copy of his \$3 (???), 200+ page edition of *OUAD* gratis, and I never requested, nor did I desire to read the thing. In other words, he sent me an unsolicited freebee. Though it was generous of him, I will probably never use the thing, let alone read it. Wasn't it nice of Bruce to decide for me that it was necessary for me to exercise the "option available" to me. And you had to pay \$3 for four paragraphs of worth. Hell, Jeff, I could have sent you my copy of *OUAD* for the postage costs only if you had only waited for me to get my copy. By the way, Jeff, I consider you a person, not a nobody. If you were nobody, I couldn't write to you.

[I doubt Jeff meant to imply that there were only four paragraphs of value in *OUAD*. By the way, have you written to Jeff? If not, that must mean that you think he *is* nobody.]

**(STEVE EMMERT)** I'm not a publisher and have no plans to become one. I don't have a computer; I don't even have a typewriter. But if ever I did publish, I doubt I'd do it by the book. (*OUAD*, that is.) There's something very attractive to me about solving the problems of publishing, or any other endeavor, with original thinking rather than by turning to page 83 of a reference work. If someone tells me what's around every corner or what's over every hill, I lose interest quickly, as I'm merely comparing my impression to that of my "guide." That's not to say that I never read a record review before buying the record, but I don't necessarily want a canned solution to every problem.

[Hah, it's only a matter of time! I don't know how many times Bob Olsen and Kathy told me they'd "never GM" a game. Sooner or later we'll get you, even if you have to hand write each issue.]

**(WALLACE NICOLL)** Plenty of scope for comment. As you probably realize, a chunk of my stuff on graphics appeared—third or fourth generation copied, I may add. I even offered to reformat it to US page size—this wouldn't have been too difficult to do. I was a trifle upset at the poor appearance, especially when we consider what the articles are about in the first place!

What I'd like to know is whether any of the new

editors and those using the *OUAD* found my graphics articles of use/interesting. Some response on this, and what they might like from a second edition version would be most useful as I'm damn sure not going to let Bruce reprint the old stuff this time! In that vein, I'd also be interested in getting hold of material costings for the likes of rub-down lettering, tones, etc, plus copying costs, typesetting costs, etc.

I must admit to have read through *OUAD*, and occasionally refer to it—mainly for ideas on the GMing side of things. It at least gives more than one side to most situations, giving you, usually "unsure, dazed, and confused," some better idea on how to adjudicate/arbitrate, etc. I have also used it when I was thinking about what items might go into a set of houserules, should we ever have to produce the things—hate them, really, too restrictive!!

[Oh, houserules aren't so bad if you don't let them get out of hand. They are best used as guidelines, not The Law etched in stone.]

[I thought your graphics articles were interesting, though way too long and probably useless for the average pubber. I'm more concerned with getting my zeen out on time with the least amount of effort possible than making each effort look like a masterpiece. With that in mind, how about some ideas on quick and easy ways to make zeens look good? The first and most obvious is to use a decent typewriter ribbon! What else is there?]

[That your stuff barely legible was an interesting ironic touch, though unintentional I'm sure.]

**(BRUCE LINSEY)** Well, it's obvious that some people found *OUAD* helpful and others did not. That is precisely what I expected. In response to Jeff Zarse, you say that, "I bet if you asked some of those people to give you some pointers, they'd be happy to do so—even eager." Of course we would, at least those of us still in the hobby. But by putting all these people's opinions together in one publication, we make Jeff's job of obtaining the info much easier. I mean, you could raise the same arguments against having fairly comprehensive novice packets too: part of the charm is in learning as you go, the novice could just write to successful players, etc. And that is fine—everyone has that option too.

As for your objection to the size and thoroughness of the thing, this seems merely to reflect a difference in our styles. My preference is generally to go at something in a thorough manner—that should be clear from my presentation of the Runestone Poll results, too—and yours is apparently not. There is nothing wrong with this. It would be quite possible



for a publisher's handbook to have one-fourth the material that *OUAD* does, and be just as successful (albeit to a different audience). No problem, and indeed this variety in approaches lends a lot of vitality to the hobby (how dull it would be if everyone did things the same way!).

[Yes, we have quite different styles. I like to challenge my readers to come up with some ideas of their own, and find creative solutions to problems. You like to cover the problem from every possible angle and let the reader choose the solution that they like best. Each approach will appeal to a different type of person.

[I don't particularly care for comprehensive novice packets, either, particularly the "How to Play..." sections. Usually such articles are extremely limited in scope, only covering one possible style or strategy per country. Novices may be somewhat deceived into believing that this is the "accepted" strategy for the country in question, and we end up with the same old boring game played out over and over again.]

**(MARK BERCH)** In replying to novice pubber Jeff Zarse, you said, "The most valuable bit of info in this 200+ page opus turned out (for Jeff Zarse) to be a four paragraph blurb. That just about sums up my whole case." Could you explain just how that sums things up? Jeff said, "I, also, found it very useful," and "I'm glad that I can send my \$3 to Dalton, MA and have these people appear on my doorstep." Now, given that he liked it so much, there has to be *something* that he liked the best. It just happened to be a short essay on mailing labels. It doesn't mean he only liked the short pieces, or that he liked it because it was short. It seems to me that you view the size of *OUAD* as being its most salient characteristic.

As for Caruso's remarks, he says, "I'm quite sure that the same advice could have been given in less than one-quarter of the space, in at least general terms." This is from someone who states explicitly that he hasn't seen it. I'd like to know how Caruso can be "quite sure" that over 150 pages could be lopped off if he hasn't even looked at it. Someone who would take a 200-page publication, to which dozens and dozens of people had contributed, *and criticize it without even looking at it*, is saying something very revealing about his own character.

[Yes, I consider *OUAD*'s size to be its most salient characteristic. Suppose someone wrote a ten-page article thoroughly analyzing the Turkish opening of A Con-Bul. Would I have to read the article

before I could tell that it's mostly hot air and largely worthless? No, of course not. Likewise, I can estimate that 200 pages is going to contain a lot of deadwood when it comes to publishing. Fifty pages is a *lot* of writing if you stick to generalities. Having actually read the whole thing, I can't disagree with Caruso.

[My case for the handbook so ably summed up by Jeff is that the four-paragraph snippets are going to be more valuable than the six-page "in depth" articles. Most topics just don't warrant that much attention.]

**(MICHAEL HOPCROFT)** Since you don't like novice pubber packages, what advice would *you* give to a new publisher (besides the obvious "Don't do it!")? I wonder how you would answer questions about getting new subscribers and the like.

I haven't been getting nearly enough mail lately. Especially subscription checks!

One question I would like immediate advice on. In the average print run, about how many extra copies would you advise making for samples (assuming that any excess can go to the Zeen Bank if you haven't sent them out by the end of the issue period)? I'm vacillating between 10 and 20 (to go with a sublist of 30), with the idea that I can make extra copies if necessary. I'd feel rather silly if somebody wrote in asking for a sample and I didn't have one. I would feel equally silly if I had 10 or 15 copies of the last issue on my hands at the end of the month. I assume one can always make extra for conventions and the like. So how much is too much?

[Quite the contrary, my advice is: "Go for it!" Other words of wisdom have appeared here over the issues, and if you'd like to see some oldies, just ask. That's what we're here for, after all.

[I make very few extra copies of each issue, maybe about five. When they run out, I either send out older issues that have stockpiled or just send a copy of the next issue when it's printed. I still have several good sized boxes of old issues in the basement, from when we used to print way too many. Unless you're going to send out your extra issues immediately, don't get carried away! And save one "suitable for framing" copy of each issue for yourself.]

[...But to remove the unnecessary ramblings and prattlings of my addled mind merely demonstrates just how necessary they really are. Thus we have one of the essential paradoxes of publishing: are the pointless, unnecessary ramblings really unnecessary, or are they as vital as they appear to be...]



## Out of Dipdom

**(LARRY PEERY)** Here's an idea for a subject for *HOL*. I think it might be fun as well as informative.

My question is: How do you describe *Diplomacy* to non-Diplomacy playing friends, etc?

When somebody asks you what is it all about...what do you say? I have come up with a pretty standard answer that I use, and depending on how people react to it, I can usually tell if they are likely game or hobby material. Usually it comes up when they see the magazine (at work, at the printer) or see me using the IDS letterhead at the printer, etc. What's *Diplomacy*? That's how it all starts.

I'll ask them, "Have you ever played Monopoly? (Usually they say yes.) Have you played Chess, or do you know how to play Chess? (Usually they say yes, even if they've never touched a Chess piece in their life.) Have you ever played Risk? (Younger people usually say yes, or at least they've heard of it.) If it is an older person, I'll ask them if they've ever played Poker. (And most will say yes.) Assuming I get several yeses out of my list, I'll come back with something like: "Well, Diplomacy is a combination of Monopoly, Chess, Risk, and Poker; only much better." And then I launch into a brief description of the game, my background, etc.

What usually intrigues people is that I've spent all these years on a game and hobby and gotten so little out of it. And so it goes from there.

[I usually say that it's a game much like Risk (which most people seem to know about) without dice, based on persuasion and deciding who to trust. Or else I describe it as a strategy game based loosely on pre-WWI Europe, and that it's a lot more fun than it sounds. I don't like to talk about the game to people that haven't played though, as any description would be inadequate. I'm surprised how many people *have* played the game, there are quite a few.

[How about the rest of you folks?]

**(MELINDA HOLLEY)** (Irish ceili dancing?) Does ogling Tom Selleck come under this category? Perhaps not. Actually, I want to do a bit of begging (worthy of a TV evangelist). Does anybody out there VCR television shows? Particularly the short-lived ShadowChasers series? I have all but one (which was preempted to show a University of Kentucky basketball game...I knew there was a reason I hated basketball)—the UFO episode. So if anybody out there has access to such an animal, please let me know.

## Polls

**(MARK BERCH)** Mark Larzelere says in his letter, "Remember a few years ago when *Dipimaster* topped the poll? A number of people (including Berch/Linsey) chose to just omit *DM* in listing the poll winners. It's hard to blame them for doing that. But if *DM* had been #53, it would have been listed, just like *AG* and *Known Game Openings* and other small 'zeens' get listed." Larzelere has gotten his facts totally wrong. *Dipimaster* was listed (page 1 of *DD* #63, first line of the 4th paragraph). What I did was to divide the list between zeens and subzeens, and report them both separately. Moreover, my decision to do that had nothing whatsoever to do with *DM* itself. Thus, Dick Martins's statement, "*Dipimaster* was ignored because its sole purpose was to win the poll" is totally false with regards to me. I announced in the *previous issue* of *DD*, before I had the results, that I would split the zeens in this way. *Lone Star Diplomat* had done the same thing in the previous year, and it made a lot of sense to me at the time (see *LSD* #13).

And as for Linsey, *VOD* #65 did indeed list *Dipimaster* as being at the top of the poll results. *VOD*, unlike *DD*, did not split the results. If Larzelere wants to dump on the Runestone Poll, the least thing he could do is get his facts right.

[I am sure he will do so in the future. Where was *Dipimaster* a subzeen? I thought it started out as a very small zeen, and would thus be eligible to win the zeen half of the poll.]

**(RUSS RUSNAK)** As far as things for discussion, how about a check list for rating a GM. Instead of rating a GM from 1-10, rate him in the areas of timeliness, accuracy, legibility, impartiality, etc. It could produce interesting results. Also should there be a slot in there for packaging (the zeen), or should that be rated separately?

[Legibility and packaging sound similar, why not lump them together? All these categories are starting to get a little complicated, though—why not just accuracy, timeliness, and "other"? If there's ever another Peeripoll, maybe we can get Larry to cover GMs as well as zeens.]

**(MARK LARZELERE)** Where do you get the idea that the sole purpose of *Dipimaster* was to win the Leeder poll? It certainly wasn't my purpose. Having a group of people vote it a 10 was something that happened after the fact, and something I had



very little to do with (actually nothing other than dropping the suggestion at a Byrnecon).

Besides, you've totally missed my point. *DM* isn't the only "zeen" to have been dropped from the list after finishing high in it (*Woodpecker* also was, and there might be others). The point is that they wouldn't have been dropped from the list if they'd finished near the bottom. So there are a number of zeens which are allowed to finish low in the poll, but not high in it. That isn't fair. If a zeen can't finish high in the poll, it shouldn't be on the list at all.

You say, "Why should *AG* even be rated against *KGO* or *Everything*?" That's exactly my point. Why should *KGO* be rated against *EE* and the results listed as "*EE* defeated *KGO*"? It's ridiculous. They need a better way of defining what zeens belong on the list.

There were a number of suggestions for changing the poll floating around in that one issue of *Costaguana* I mentioned. I don't know which way would be best, but anything's better than just throwing all zeens on the list except the ones that are totally arbitrarily called subzeens.

My own suggestion was to have the voters give two ratings (on a 0-10 scale) for each zeen—one for reading material, one for how good the zeen is to play in. That way the only zeens that make the main list are ones that both have reading material and that you can play in. Warehouse zeens and "read-only" zeens would have their own lists. This wouldn't overly complicate voting in the poll (whatever change is made should keep voting in the poll simple).

[You're right, *Dipimaster* didn't exist to win the poll—that came after the fact. However, to call *DM* and *Woodpecker*, both limited-run efforts "zeens" is to stretch the point. They just shouldn't have been eligible.

[Why not break the poll into "game zeens" and "non-game zeens"? That way some of the more ridiculous comparisons would be avoided, though not all. At least I wouldn't have people asking to join games in *HOL* on the basis of a high showing in the poll like I have this year. How would you define a "warehouse" zeen? After all, I consider *Retal* to be "warehouse" but I don't think most people would agree with me.

[The zeen/subzeen split isn't totally arbitrary. After all, a bad zeen can profit by having a good subzeen but the reverse isn't really true. It's also usually easy to tell which zeen is contained in the other.

[I can't really say that some zeens are allowed to finish low but not high. After all, zeens haven't

been arbitrarily dropped while similar zeens are included (except for *KK*, I guess).]

(**JULIE MARTIN**) Since when is the "Give-Retal-A-Zero" campaign a personal attack against Bruce Linsey? When we voted for each issue of *Retal* separately, it wasn't a personal attack on John Leeder. When we made up a zeen and gave it all 10s, it wasn't a personal attack on Randolph Smyth. When we ran the "zero" campaign last year, Linsey didn't complain of being attacked. For me, at least, it was just an entertaining way of saying, "This poll is meaningless, and should be treated as the joke that it is."

Is the poll meaningless? Yes; it is inherently biased because the sample is neither random nor exhaustive. Those who tell us that the more people who vote, the more significant/less skewed the results become are, statistically speaking, wrong. They may simply be ignorant of proper polling procedures and statistical analysis. They may deliberately be leading the voters astray. Whatever the case, get it straight now: big numbers of voters just do not equal "true" results unless the sample is random or unless you get votes from *every single person*. Therefore, the poll is inherently skewed.

So, are further "poll-skewing" activities "childish" and "immature"? No more childish and immature than demanding, "If you don't play poll and have fun the way we say to, you can't play at all." Are such activities "unethical," "destructive," or any other way "bad"? If so, they are no worse than the "poll-skewing" activities of the pollsters themselves.

Leeder himself set the precedent (and we all know how important precedents are). The Omniscient One decided that he could tell the difference between "gag" votes and "real" ones, and disallowed entire ballots on the basis of one "gag" vote, reasoning that the rest of the ballot was a "gag" too.

Smyth continued the grand tradition of pollster interference. About a month before the polling period ended, The Omnipresent One issued his own ballot listing about ten zeens, including *EE*, *Snafu*, and *VOD* (some of his acknowledged personal favorites), which he didn't think had received enough votes yet.

And then we have Linsey, the Omnipotent One, who has made telephone calls soliciting votes from only a certain group of voters, and who solicits ballots from people who have been out of *Dipdom* for over three years, among other things.

The interesting thing is that these three pollsters could see the mote in our eye, but not the plank in



their own. Leeder tossed out the votes for separate issues of *Retal* (although he missed one), Smyth ditched the non-existent zeen, and Linsey threw out the 0s. But they apparently thought their own actions were completely justified.

How can you expect a bunch of Diplomacy players not to try to influence the results of a poll? Even if you could do away with silly "poll-skewing" campaigns by the voters (and you cannot ever be completely certain of doing so; I know of one instance of ballot box-stuffing that went undetected), and even if you did do away with "poll-skewing" activities by the pollsters, you're still left with a poll that is basically a joke or a toy, and will be treated as such by those who know better. And tying it to cancer research doesn't make it any more "real." The Emperor still isn't wearing any clothes.

In any case, I think it unfortunate that Bruce associates himself so closely with this inanimate poll that anyone who takes the poll less seriously than he does is "attacking" him and engaging in "destructive" fun. Lighten up! And the same goes for the rest of you—you know who you are!

[Tying the poll to cancer research serves as a guilt trip to get more people to vote. Anything for a good cause.... And besides, who would want to come out against the poll and be portrayed as being pro-cancer? Not me, no sir. That's why I ran the "give Retal a zero and destroy cancer" campaign again this year. Hey, I did my part. But don't insist that I suddenly consider the Poll anything more than the joke it has always been. That would be asking too much.]

**(SIMON BILLENNESS)** My only gripe with the Runestone Poll is that this year the non-Diplomacy zeens have been excluded. Zeens like *The K-Zine*, *Disease City*, and *The Buzzard's Breath* are certainly on the fringes of the hobby, but then so are Diplomacy zeens like *Dippy*, *Boast*, and *Control*. I feel it would have been fairer to include non-Diplomacy zeens in the balloting. If they're not really part of the hobby, then they won't receive enough votes to qualify for a place in the final listings. That several non-Diplomacy zeens reached the main listings last year while several Diplomacy zeens did not shows that many people do consider such zeens part of the hobby.

[On the contrary, non-Dip zeens haven't been excluded. *Zeen Register*, for example, finished in the top ten and calling it a "Dip" zeen is stretching the definition. You consider it reasonable to compare *K-Zeen* with something like *DW* or *Rebel*? *K-*

*Zeen* may be part of Dipdom, but that doesn't necessarily mean it should be compared with other zeens.]

**(MALCOLM SMITH)** Polls: Are a pile of shit. Especially the UK Zeen Poll, which was blatantly rigged, and especially since the custodian, John Piggot, won't do anything about it.

[Was it really rigged, or is this just a case of people voting on reputation instead of first hand information? If it's the latter, then there's not much Piggot can do except feel helpless.]

**(BRUCE LINSEY)** I wish to reply to John Caruso's remarks, and will keep it brief since I know you're more interested in looking at current and future issues.

It is true that in 1985, I solicited ballots from all of my hobby friends. It is also true that I solicited ballots from hundreds of other people, and that several dozen of these were by phone call. (Thus, my denial of the accuracy of Caruso's allegation that I contacted my friends, but not Joe Average. I distinctly remember sending Joe a ballot!) My chief goal was to get as many people as possible to vote, and naturally enough, I regarded by friends as likely prospects. Thinking back on it now, my use of the phone was probably unnecessary, but there is still nothing inherently *wrong* with a pollster actively soliciting ballots. Nor do I think this implies that I'm obligated to contact every single hobbyist directly. By and large, I was trying to give every hobbyist the opportunity to vote, and at that, I think I was reasonably close to successful.

Since there was an active and concerted effort at the time to discourage people from participating, I felt (and still feel) that that was all the more justification for me to work to increase the turnout.

And yes, there *was* an organized boycott. Kathy even said in print that she and others were planning to boycott the Poll that year, and she and one other person actually printed little coupons for people to sign and send to Randolph Smyth protesting the transfer to me. About two dozen people—one-eleventh the number of voters—participated in the coupon campaign.

I admit that these days there doesn't appear to be an organized boycott, so perhaps my use of the term is no longer appropriate. It is, however, true that a handful of the original boycotters still refuse to participate so long as I'm running the thing, but that's not my problem.

Caruso is just plain wrong to say that I regard



anyone who doesn't vote as a boycotter. I do not make that claim, and never have.

As for Caruso's complaint that the Poll is (or was) inaccurate, since he was part of the group boycotting it, he has himself to blame for that, and not the pollster.

Mark Larzelere's letter contains some inaccuracies. *Kathy's Korner* is being treated this year as part of the zeen *KK/W*. This is per John Caruso's written request. Mark has only to look at the ballot and he will see.

The reason Mark never saw a response from me to the Poll forum comments in *Costaguana* is that Conrad had to delay publishing for several months for financial reasons. When he resumed publication of *Costa* very recently, my response did get printed. I pride myself on my policy of responding to criticisms, not ignoring them.

Mark is fairly close to right when he says that I regard the Poll as OK now, and thus don't want to change it. There was only one significant procedural change this year (the Davis Rule, which will be discussed in *The Cream Shall Rise!*). For the most part, I'm satisfied with the way things are now. I'll confess that there is a strong element of inertia here: unless someone can show that an alternative way of doing things is inherently better than what we are used to, I'm going to be slow to make changes.

He is not correct to say that if *DipiMaster* had been #53, it would have been listed. This refers to the year before the Subzeen Poll was formally begun—the year in which a number of subzeens made the main list for zeens. For the historical record, I have removed *all* of the subzeens from the list for that year, not just *DipiMaster*. Call it tampering if you like; but as the Poll's Custodian this is a judgement call I made two years ago, when I decided to re-publish the past rankings.

Mark says that "the present poll set-up is that there is a set of small zeens that are allowed to finish low in the poll, but are not allowed to top it." Any zeen is *allowed* to win, but the plain fact is that it's hard for a small zeen these days to be better-liked on a hobby-wide basis than, say, *Costaguana*. I don't propose to argue that more pages = more quality, but a zeen with lots of high-quality writing is going to be better-liked by more people than is a ten-page zeen with high-quality writing. That is why the high-ranking zeens are usually large ones. And, in my opinion, this is as it should be. I enjoy *Redwood Curtain*, for instance, and *Fol Si Fie*. These are small zeens with high-quality writing. But *Costa* and *Blunt Instruments* have high-quality writing too, and more of it, and so get higher scores on my ballot.

Finally, a few comments about your suggestion that we allow decimal votes for the purpose of determining preference, Dick. Bruce Geryk recently suggested the same thing to me (in private correspondence). This is not a bad idea. If I were to allow finer shades of voting than permitted by the 0-to-10 scale, I'd probably make it "any integer from 0 to 100," but that's a minor quibble. My reasons for not doing it are two-fold. First, it is my opinion that a 0-to-10 scale gives voters enough space to make whatever distinctions they need to make. Indeed, a lot of voters send in ballots with scores ranging only from 7 to 10 or so. I realize that others' opinions will differ, but I find the 8s on my ballot are close enough in quality to the 9s that I don't need to get any finer. And I rate a lot more zeens than most of the voters do. My other reason for not changing is simply that I am reluctant to alter such a fundamental procedure unless it is absolutely necessary; *i.e.*, if what we have now doesn't work. People are used to a 0-to-10 scale, and if we were to go to 0-to-100 (or allow decimals), there would be a year or two of confusion while the hobby got used to the new procedure. I'd rather not have that confusion unless it is necessary—and, in my opinion, it is not.

[All right, I *will* say you tampered with the results two years ago. If you make rules, you *must* stick by them. Deciding after the fact that subzeens should be split out, or ignoring the so-called "Davis Rule," just isn't kosher. I find it interesting that you treat the rules of good polling procedure in a far more cavalier fashion than your old Dip houserules.

[How many times have you asked for new votes if the voter does them "wrong" the first time? I mean besides the zero-farce this year.

[From my point of view, you have yet to make a compelling case that the preference matrix is inherently better than the old way of figuring the results. It should either be trashed or fixed (oops, bad choice of words), but the current arrangement is too contrived. Voters still haven't figured out that they should be voting on preferences and not a 0-10 absolute scale, and don't appear likely to figure that out any time soon. Averaging two rating systems that work at cross purposes makes even less sense than using either one of them by itself.

[If I vote for 50 zeens, how can I possibly represent that properly in a 0-10 range, much less the 7-10 range that most voters use! Instead I am forced to give zeens lower votes than I would ordinarily like to. Some knucklehead is going to think it's because I feel his zeen is worthless and freak out. Happens every year.

[It's easy to amass a lot of high-quality writing



when you only come out once in a blue moon (take this zeen, for instance). I'd say that *Redwood Curtain* has put out as much "quality writing" in the last year as *BI*, but in smaller chunks. Just a guess, but I bet *Retal* has put out as many words as *Costa* and *BI* combined in the last year, though *BI* and *Costa* are tagged as "massive" while *Retal* is not. Perception doesn't always coincide with reality.]

(JOHN CARUSO) I'd like to respond to Bruce Linsey's analogy from *HOL* #11. If people boycotted the auction based on personal reasons, then it would be the boycotters hurting the auction, as Bruce Linsey says. However, if they did it because they thought of me as being dishonest, then it would be me who is hurting the auction (or a poll or service). If anyone proved that I had misused my custodial position, lied to the hobby at large, stolen money/property, or that I was proven guilty of some other similar form of dishonest behavior, then yes, I would step down for the good of the auction, as well as for the good of Dipdom. I'd even be willing to allow an ombudsman to resolve the matter. In fact, I'd insist upon it.

As a related side note, contrary to Bruce Linsey's opinion, my disapproval of him is not based on personal differences, but rather on his lack of ethics, his lack of honesty, and his failure to handle hobby-related situations in an unbiased manner, while demonstrating poor judgement.

Continuing along, Bruce Linsey states, "The boycott is not my doing and cannot be charged to me. I have never, and never will, tell any hobbyist not to vote. If people don't want to vote, fine, that's their right, but don't lay the blame on my doorstep." There is no boycott that I know of, therefore Linsey can't be blamed for something that doesn't exist. By the same token, Bruce, if you insist upon calling those who exercise "their right" (as you put it), to not vote—*boycotters*, I'd suggest that you provide proof of your claim that they are "boycotters," or stop crying wolf. Choosing not to vote, whether stated publicly or not, *does not constitute a boycott*. Asking, or more precisely, telling others not to vote (as Bruce Linsey correctly points out), *would constitute a boycott*. And how do you justify and differentiate between the one or two dozen people that you allege to be boycotting and the other 700+ people of Dipdom who do not vote? You might not realize this, but when you cry wolf about the alleged boycotters, you look very silly. And your cries of "boycott" can only add to the divisiveness that your doing the poll has caused to begin with. If that is your continued goal, then you might well be succeeding. However, if you truly want to improve the

poll, unless that is only rhetoric to make you look good in front of the masses, then you'd cease your senseless, unsubstantiated rantings about boycotters, or prove your claims. You are doing what appears to be a fairly successful poll. Why do you insist upon jeopardizing that with all this other nonsense? You don't hear me going around stating that so and so boycotted the auction, do you? But alas, we also have philosophical differences. I don't translate non-participation or lack of plugs into meaning it's a boycott. I consider it an independent choice of the individual, whether the person participated in the past or not. While it would be wonderful to have everyone plug and participate, I realize that that is extremely unlikely. To me, the glass is half full.

[Interesting that you mention the part about Linsey never telling someone not to vote. That's what he did with me this year.

[Though I would probably be characterized as a "boycotter" I don't think of it that way. If a bunch of people get disgusted with something, talk about it among themselves, and decide to avoid it that hardly seems like a boycott. If we talk about the lousy service at the restaurant down the street and decide not to go back is that a boycott? If so, I guess I do it all the time. Even so, to say the "boycott" was "organized" is stretching the truth.]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I noticed in the Runestone results that the smallest vote total of any zeen in the top 10 was 32 for *HOL*. If you're trying to pick the most popular zeen that's one thing, but the Poll likes to think they're picking the *best* zeen. I don't think there's any objective way to prove which is the best zeen of the year. That doesn't mean polls are meaningless, just that they might not mean the things we want them to mean.

I don't think people should be able to vote on zeens they don't read; Sacks told me that was one of the reasons *Hansard* finished 67th out of 67. How do you stop them? But *Hansard* does its job; it runs its games fairly smoothly and on time. It isn't meant to be that much more. The same can be said for a lot of the smaller zeens. So why pay attention to the polls when you run a zeen like that? The problem of course is that the polls are unavoidable. Somebody is going to remind you if you're doing "badly." Still, there is a place in the hobby for measures of popularity, as long as we don't imply that popularity is equal to quality.

I know, you don't believe in the Runestone Poll. I'm not sure I believe in it either. But it seems one of the few ways a publisher knows how he's doing.



I also like seeing how the field is progressing. Besides, I have a sneaking suspicion that even you will be pleased with how the poll turned out, as you did well in both the zeen and GM polls. That you have the #6 zeen in the country in *HOL* is probably pleasing even to you.

[Oh, not really. After all, my other (and better) zeen finished lower. Really, I have a pretty good idea what kind of job I'm doing with the zeens, and would rather not be bothered by dumb ratings. Besides, I'm not about to fall into the trap of believing the critics after all these years. What happens next time when I don't do nearly so well?

[Theoretically, voters are only supposed to vote on zeens that they see. Obviously, that isn't always the case, and there's no real way for a pollster to tell what's a "real" vote and what isn't. Sublist checking won't do it, as quite a few zeens are passed around. I know I see more zeens than I sub to. *HOL* got 32 votes, yet only 27 of my subbers voted. You figure it out.]

**(PAUL MILEWSKI)** I received a piece of mail from Robert Smith today, the first page of which consisted of a reproduction of his Certificate of Award from Linsey and Heintzman for winning Rookie of the Year in the '87 Subzeen Poll. The reason I am writing you about it is that he takes exception to whomever voted him a zero and bemoans that five of the top ten zeens received votes of zero, including the winner, *Costaguana*.

What seems to be overlooked by those who seem to take the Runestone Poll seriously (Robert) and those who don't (yourself) is that the results are invalid because there is not a semantic differential associated with the numerical rankings. In other words, a seven to you may have distinctly different connotations of quality than a seven to me, and no terms have been associated with each numerical choice to assure that different respondents' rankings are additive or comparable. It is possible that some people assume the scale is arithmetic, so that an eight is twice as good as a four. It is hard to tell. This is not the first time I have seen considerable time and effort spent on compiling statistics from which no valid inference can be made.

Semantic scales are tricky things, and generally the best approach is to keep it simple. A five-point scale with the midpoint indicating neutrality or indifference and the two ratings on either side representing distinctly different but not confusing (e.g., "stupendous" or "wonderful" are not as clear as "good" or "excellent") degrees of positive or negative quality would probably be the safest bet.

I am reminded of one of the criteria for the accreditation of law schools by the American Bar Association, specifically, that the law library be above average. Surprise, surprise, almost all law libraries are rated "above average," which leads one to wonder what "average" means. Shades of Prairie Home Companion's mythical community in which all the children are above average.

Indeed, Robert Smith points out that only 21 subzeens made the list this time and that his ranking of roughly 6.8 puts him slightly above the average ranking of roughly 6.6 (I will spare you the three decimal places to which the results seem to be tabulated). Only 2 of the 21 subzeens had average rankings below 5. Were 19 of the 21 subzeens above average? What does a 5 mean, then? What does any point on the 11-point, 0-through-10 scale mean?

Robert Smith also asserts that "anyone who is willing to take the time and spend the effort to GM games, type them up, and print them, deserves more than a 0 just for his/her effort." This has interesting implications, too. If 10 is perfect, who is perfect? Has anyone attained perfection, a point beyond which improvement is not possible? I don't hear anyone bitching about the 10s. True, his subzeen received one 0, but it also received five 10s. Five respondents considered *Life Goes On* to be so good it could not be better. Suitable words to express my amazement elude me. Wow will have to do.

I believe I know how you feel about the Runestone Poll in general, and I am not unsympathetic to your position. However, I think it also bears mentioning that the methodology of the poll stinks on its face.

[Not only can a 7 mean different things to different people just on a numerical basis (such as whether 7 is "average" or two points above 5 which is "average," etc), but it can mean entirely different things depending on how someone is voting. For instance, my ballot was based strictly on preferences and a 7 hardly means a 7 at all! (Never mind that my ballot was discounted for some unexplained reason.) I gave tens not for perfection but for the zeens I like most, and similar with the zeroes. To try and chomp that up into some meaningful "average" is pointless.

[I found the issue of *LGO* interesting not so much for its treatment of the Runestone results, but for its mere existence. For a publisher to put out an issue solely dedicated to poll results is both amazing and disturbing. Is Robert more interested in entertaining his readers or an ego-gratifying poll position? You want feedback, Robert? Make *LGO* more distinctive. Invent something or do something



in a unique way that will catch people's eyes. That way, even if you don't finish higher than #11 next year you'll still have accomplished something.

[Thanks for the above average letter, Paul!]

**(ALAN STEWART)** The question of whether there is or was a Runestone Poll "boycott" is interesting. The definition of "boycott" seems to be a "combination to punish or coerce by systematic refusal of social or commercial relations." By this definition, it seems to me there was a boycott in the past but there is not this year, non-voters abstaining this year for any one of a number of reasons and evincing little interest in promoting "combination" or in punishing or coercing.

Poll Winner: *Magus*.

**(ANDY LISCHETT)** Handicap the Poll? Okay.

*Praxis*, 30%; *House of Lords*, 25%; *The Canadian Diplomat*, 25%, *Europa Express*, 10%, *Magus*, 10%.

[Good guesses, as all were in the top eight. I thought that *Costa* would have suffered more in comparison with last year, and that *BI* was too new. I also hadn't reckoned that *EE* would be ineligible.

[I've never seen a copy of *The Canadian Diplomat*, what's it like?

[Too bad I managed to lose Conrad's guesses, sending them to bit heaven in a careless fit of electronic cutting and pasting.

[My final guesses were *Praxis* 50%, *Costa* 30%, *BI* 20%, once I found out that *EE* was out of the running.]

[The top tens, in case you haven't seen them already:]

### Zeen

*Costaguana*  
*Blunt Instruments*  
*Praxis*  
*Diplomacy World*  
*House of Lords*  
*Redwood Curtain*  
*Canadian Diplomat*  
*Magus*  
*Over There*  
*Zeen Register*

### Subzeen

*High Inertia*  
*Humboldt*  
*Megadiplomat*  
*Out to Pasture*  
*Fiat Bellum*  
*Only Yesterday*  
*Erehwon*  
*Submarine Warfare*  
*Hare of the Dog*  
*Melnibone Herald*

### GM

Andy Lischett  
Lee Kendter Sr  
Dick Martin  
Gary Coughlan  
Jeff Richmond  
John Boardman  
Dave Carter  
Steve Langley  
Kathy Caruso  
Fred Davis

## Why?

**(KEVIN TIGHE)** Why? I publish mainly because I perceived a need and tried to fill it. I began writing *Humboldt* when I saw a lack of mainstream humor in subzeens. At that time ('83) most Dip humor relied on knowing certain people to understand their in-jokes. Friends always thought I was a funny guy ("Hey, he's acting funny again"), so I thought I could pull it off without relying on in-jokes. Over the last four years that goal hasn't changed.

I put out *Redwood Curtain*, not because I wanted to GM, but for the lack of three-week game offerings. My playing experience with three-weekers from Larzelere and Meinel, and two-weekers from Hanson, proved to me that a PBM Dip game doesn't have to be a slow, plodding, three year experience. I figured the only way to spread the good word was to offer three-week games.

Both publications are under five pages since I feel zeens and my humor are best taken in small doses. I still don't enjoy the GMing stuff (*A CON-bul*), but I like pubbing. Is that strange?

[No, I don't think so. After all, there are quite a few people who prefer GMing to putting out a zeen. Why not the reverse? Your humor works well in a five page bundle—just the right amount.

[I wish there were more three-week games. I wish I had the time to play in one again!]

**(MALCOLM SMITH)** I publish for the simple reason that I've always done so. Ever since I helped my father produce the odd copy of the local geological society's magazine, *Conglomerate*. After then, I went to college, became the writer, editor, printer, publisher, etc, for the college magazine, *Buggerall*. That lasted two years until I worked in London for one year as a Civil Servant (a part of the degree



course). I set up the Civil Service Diplomacy Society, and I produced the magazine, *The Diplomat*. After the 12 months was up, I had to go back to college, and so I had to start my own magazine up, *Bohemian Rhapsody*. And so, umpteen years on (or so it seems) I'm here where I am now.

[Sounds familiar. I've been publishing since I was eighteen, and do so as much from habit as anything else, now. Julie wants me to quit and take up drumming, but I don't know about that. Dipdom seems like less work!]

[Part of your "education" consisted of working as a civil servant? Would that be the "Masochism" requirement, or those needed twelve credits for the "Bureaucracy" department?]

**(WALLACE NICOLL)** A quickie now on "Why." Five years of university after thirteen at school—18 years continuous education, most of it "literate": essays, tutorials, practicals, reports. Then into the real live world, a 9-to-5 job (with a lot of overtime). Being in the cartographic line, most of my work, most of my thinking, was graphical: layouts, drawings, etc. The only words we used were other people's. We didn't have to think in sentences, paragraphs, chapters. My mind was becoming, literally, word-dead. Doing the zeen, and before that, writing articles for other zeens (an excellent apprenticeship to being a fully-fledged editor, I may add) was my way to resurrect the literate side of my mind, my brain, and getting me back to normality. I don't notice much of a change with my writing style over 17 issues of *PoW*. What I do notice is that I'm not at a loss for even the simplest of words now, as compared to, say, four years ago—it is quite unnerving, knowing what you want to say, and finding you can't think of the simplest of words....

Coming from the graphics background that I do, *PoW* was initially pointed in the direction of "best-looking zeen in the UK hobby." Now, we started off with some quite pretty (fairly revolutionary) layouts, but since then we've fallen into the "standardization" trap. As editor, you want to make your readers associate with the zeen. By knowing where things will be, they can easily flick through to their game, fave article or column, or whatever. But by being standardized you become staid and predictable. I keep wanting to have a radical change in *PoW*, but the effort is probably more than the benefits are worth. I've tried to "modernize" the Dip report layout pages and introduce graphical "page" elements to the Definitive Downfall, Gesta Danarum reports with borders, etc. We go, or at least try to go, heavy on the illos to help break up the text—a

problem I've noticed with most of the "heavy" US zeens—and which we occasionally overlook—e.g., *PoW* 17, pages 3 to 7 have no illos and the text is all very heavy. We'd like to have an illo of some sort every three or four pages at least.

[I try to do even more than that, even if it's only a line dividing the columns in *Retal*. With a cartoon every page or two and maps for the games, the text is broken up fairly nicely. I'm surprised that *POW* isn't even nominated for those "best looking" awards, as it looks fabulous compared to the usual stuff I see. With *HOL* I like to stick to a very simple look, and only use two or three of my possible thirty-plus fonts. Though I'm not above sticking in a little Elvish on occasion....

ᚠᚢᚦᚢᚱ ᚠᚢᚦᚢᚱ ᚠᚢᚦᚢᚱᚠᚢᚱᚠᚢᚱ

[I found it much easier to write articles when I first started than I do now. Whether that's due to lack of words or simply lack of inspiration is the question.]

**(MELINDA HOLLEY)** Outside? You mean outside the confines of my house? The one my sister wishes to remain a hermetically sealed environment? Outside? With (ugh) insects? Yech!! You're perverted, Dick! Actually, I've always been a sedentary creature. And when we got remote control for the TV...well, there went that form of exercise.

[Hmmm. Why not sip mint juleps by the pool as you watch your portable TV? If you'd lived some of the places I have, you would realize that sometimes there are more insects inside than out!]

## Old Guard

**(ANDY LISCHETT)** I was a little surprised to see in *HOL* #11 that *Cheesecake* is the eighth oldest surviving Diplomacy (game) zeen. Eight years doesn't seem that long. I was also surprised that *Retaliation* is the ninth oldest. I remember the big splash *Retaliation* made when you began, and I remember thinking that you'd probably fold within a year or two, as most big-splashes do. I was wrong, and you didn't go the way of *Volkerwanderung* and *Black Frog*. Good for you.

Of the zeens older than mine, I'm only familiar with *Fol-Si-Fie* (which readers of *Cheesecake* must get tired of hearing is my favorite zeen, so I'll tell readers of *HOL*) and have never seen an issue of *Boast* or of *Bushwacker*. I've only seen a couple of second-hand issues of *Western Star Dippy*, even



though Jim Benes doesn't live far from me and is responsible for me hearing of the game of Diplomacy. (He was (is?) a producer for WBBM radio in Chicago, and in '75 or '76 one of his shows mentioned a game like Risk, but without dice.)

[You've never seen a copy of *Boast*? Let's see, I think I had a copy of issue #9 lying around here somewhere...I'll send it to you as soon as it shows up. If you like satire you'd love *Graustark*—everything in there is satirical or can be taken that way. Otherwise it's just a good place to play Dip.

[Actually, *Retal* didn't start splashing around until it was about a year old—the first ten issues combined came to about 70 pages. Zeens that start big don't tend to last. For that matter, zeens that grow big don't last either. I think *Retal* and *KK/W* are the only ones that average more than 20 pages (both put out by husband/wife teams, too—there's a message there). On the other hand, zeens that start small tend to stick around. It took *Life of Monty* a year to fill the first game, and Don's still around.

[I still remember the "warehouse" issue of *Cheesecake* (#14?). How long did it take you to put that together?]

(MELINDA HOLLEY) I don't think *Perelandra*'s five-month break would keep Pete from stating "continuous publication since June, 1982." I consider a fold of more than six months to be the break point. 'Course, if somebody wants to get picky, Pete could get an argument against it from someone.

[Like for instance....]

(LARRY PEERY) In reference to Gaughan's question: five months? Yes, in his case, I think so. I would say any break longer than three times the normal schedule (e.g., three months for a monthly zeen, etc.) is the maximum limit.

[Julie agrees with you, Larry, but I agree more with Melinda. The tie-breaker is that Pete has continuously published *something* for the whole time, so I'll toss *Perelandra* onto the list. What the heck, it's free—and one five month "fold" over a five year period ain't bad at all.

[And this wraps up the biggest HOL yet. There's more, too, but we're bumped up against the three-ounce limit as it is! So take care of yourselves, and I hope to hear from you all Real Soon Now.]

Dick Martin  
26 Orchard Way North  
Rockville, MD 20854-6128

*first class*